

*On 'Life* and the other writings in this volume contain Tolstoy's conclusions at the close of the years he gave to a study of religion. He rejected the Church; he accepted the morality of Jesus. He fought at once the ecclesiastic and the materialist; the vast genius which created *War and Peace* here devotes itself to the discovery of a spiritual peace possible to men.

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ON LIFE  
AND ESSAYS ON RELIGION



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ON LIFE  
AND ESSAYS ON RELIGION

BY LEO TOLSTÓY

*Translated*  
*with an Introduction by*  
AYLMER MAUDE

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LEO TOLSTÓY

Born, Yásnaya Polyána, Túla

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## INTRODUCTION

**O**N LIFE is Tolstóy's statement of the conclusions he had reached by 1887 after ten years devoted to thought and study on religion.

No one acquainted with his life and works can reasonably doubt that he was one of the frankest and sincerest men who ever lived, but if further evidence on that point were needed, this work would supply it, considering the circumstances under which it was written.

By a careful study of the Church creeds Tolstóy had reached the conclusion that they consist of meaningless verbiage and incredible statements which afford no real guidance for life. An even more intense and prolonged study of the Gospels convinced him that the understanding of life held by Jesus was reasonable, and affords the best possible guidance for life. But it seemed to him that the Church, by declaring the sixty-six books in the Bible to be all equally inspired by God, had reduced them to one dead level, so that the precepts of Jesus are presented as no more divine than the legends of the Old Testament, or the record of the cruel deeds of a jealous Jehovah. More than that, he was convinced that the essential teaching of Jesus has been twisted to link it up with the Jewish Scriptures, and with records interspersed with miracles to attract the belief of an evil and adulterous generation seeking after a sign, and has been misinterpreted in order to secure authority for a Church which when persecuting its rivals has not scrupled to slay thousands of human beings. He therefore defines the Church as 'power in the hands of certain men'.

At the very peak of literary success he devoted

ten years of his life to this study of religion, and to clarify his conclusions wrote the works contained in this and another volume, well knowing that their publication would be prohibited, and that even, if clandestinely circulated they would call down on him the ridicule of the advanced section of Russian society, then for the most part under the influence of the materialistic philosophy which, following on the success of Darwin's teaching, expected ere long to be able to explain man by mechanics and demonstrate the senselessness of all religion. To them the fact that the author of *War and Peace* seriously occupied himself with religion seemed almost to indicate that he had taken leave of his senses. On the other hand the Orthodox Russo-Greek Church, under the guidance of Pobedonóstsev, the lay Head of the Most Holy Synod, actively persecuted dissenters, suppressed books it disapproved of, and though, after some hesitation, it refrained from physically molesting Tolstóy, he knew that he was exposing himself and his friends to danger and incurring the grave displeasure of the authorities of Church and State. He also incurred the disapproval and hostility of his wife, to whom the favour of the powers-that-be was of much concern.

Despite this, after the completion of *Anna Karénina* in 1877, at the age of fifty, Tolstóy devoted himself to this study of religion, and as a result of his search for the meaning and purpose of life has left a record which, though it does not appeal to those who belong to an infallible Church—for they that are whole need no physician—should be of interest and value to others, for as Bernard Shaw says:

'There is no surer symptom of a sordid and fundamentally stupid mind, however powerful it may be in many practical activities, than a contempt for metaphysics. A person may be supremely able as a mathematician, engineer, parliamen-

tary tactician, or racing bookmaker; but if that person has contemplated the universe all through life without ever asking "What the devil does it all mean?" he (or she) is one of those people for whom Calvin accounted by placing them in his category of the predestinately damned.'

It is precisely that problem of 'What does it all mean?' that Tolstóy here deals with reasonably, and without any appeal to miracles, or superstition, or established authority.

Until the time of his death—that is for a further twelve years—he continued to concern himself with religion, but from 1887 onwards there was no considerable change in his outlook, only a broadening and further elucidation of his understanding of the matter, the culmination of which was his very lucid essay *What is Religion?* The year before his death his continued concern with the subject, as well as his love of children, was shown by *The Teaching of Jesus*, written as the outcome of classes he held at Yásnaya Polyána for peasant children of from ten to thirteen years of age. He tells us that 'guided by the way the children repeated what I told them and by their questions, I composed this booklet', which contains what seemed to him surest and most essential in the Gospel records of Christ's doctrine.

It is a peculiarity of *On Life* that, though it corresponds to Tolstóy's understanding of the teaching of Jesus, he has avoided the confusion that arises from divergent interpretations of the Gospel texts, by stating his case independently of the Gospels, merely citing a sentence here and there by way of illustration, as he might have done from any other book.

As he had foreseen, the publication of *On Life* was prohibited in Russia, only some parts being permitted. Considerably later it was printed in Switzerland, in the Russian language, but the proof-sheets were not submitted to Tolstóy so that the



work never received the scrupulous revision he usually devoted to anything he sent to the press. Owing partly to this, and partly to the very poor quality of a version in the American edition of Tolstóy's works that found its way into most of our libraries, it happened that whereas *Confession* and *What I Believe* attracted much attention, *On Life* has been almost ignored. The American version I refer to was by Miss Isabel Hapgood, who accomplished the difficult task of translating the Russian Church service into English very well, but was completely out of sympathy with Tolstóy's views, and seems not to have understood them at all.

In 1896 when living in Moscow I was greatly interested by *On Life*, and finding that some passages in the Russian text were obscure, I compared it with the above-mentioned translation. I found this quite unintelligible, and decided that an effort ought to be made to enable English readers to understand Tolstóy's message. I did not foresee the difficulties that stood in the way of getting an edition of a foreign author published and accepted by the public when a collected edition of his works was already on the market, had been accepted by the trade, and was installed on the shelves of our public libraries.

On examining other translations I came to the conclusion that—though they were not all as bad as that one—none of them did Tolstóy justice, and I felt so convinced that his works deserved to be presented in readable and reliable form, that the inception of the Centenary Edition (the version here followed) may be said to have dated from that time.

Tolstóy's thoughts expressed in *On Life* did not, however, even then entirely fail to reach English and American readers. Mr. Bolton Hall, a New York lawyer, on reading *On Life* realized that though the work, as translated, was largely un-

intelligible, the book dealt with matters of fundamental importance and interest. He therefore tried a French translation which proved to be not quite so bad, and from the two of them, aided by his own common sense and interest in the subject, produced a book which Tolstóy accepted as a good interpretation of his views. This work of Mr. Bolton Hall's underwent revision after its first publication, and finally was known under the title of *Life, and Love and Peace*. Seldom before had the meaning of a book, after so completely escaping its translator, been recaptured by some one unacquainted with the language in which it was written.

Let it be noted in passing that 'my brother' to whom Tolstóy refers in section xxxi of *On Life*, was his brother Nicholas, repeatedly mentioned in the first volume of the *Life of Tolstóy* in this edition.

An excellent epigraph for *On Life* would be a verse from the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

Never the Spirit was born,  
The Spirit shall cease to be never—  
Birthless and deathless and changeless  
Remaineth the Spirit for ever.

Madame Blavatsky, by the way, read the book when it first appeared, and declared Tolstóy to be 'a true Theosophist'. He himself thought that it indicates a fundamental unity between Eastern and Western religions, and that all the great religions are fundamentally one, and are only separated by the miracles, the superstitions, and the priestcraft, that cause enmity and discord between them.

There is an evident connexion between Tolstóy's work on religion and the whole Modernist movement, but with this fundamental difference, that whereas the Modernists regard the Church as a beneficent institution, Tolstóy regarded it as the

chief obstacle to the dissemination of any intellectually honest religious belief.

Passing now to the other articles in this volume: *Religion and Morality* states the reason why a code of morality not resting on any philosophic basis cannot supply the place of religion, and why therefore Ethical Societies generally dry up and fade away. The reply it contains to Thomas Huxley's Romanes Lecture of 1894 is as much to the point to-day as when it was written, and brings out clearly the difference between Huxley's materialistic philosophy and the religious conception Tolstóy held.

In *Reason and Religion* the age-long argument that man should not trust his reason but should let other people do his thinking for him because they can do it better, is well met. Tolstóy points out that man is endowed with reason in order that he may use it, and that he *must* think with his own head, for he has no other way of thinking.

The short article on *How to Read the Gospels*, not only explains why Tolstóy found it possible to attach great importance to certain Gospel texts while rejecting others, but gives valuable advice on how to read books in general. 'One must choose out those parts that are quite clear, dividing them from what is obscure or confused; and from what is clear we must form our idea of the drift and spirit of the whole work.' Readers who follow that advice when reading Tolstóy's own works reap far more advantage than those who concentrate their attention on points with which they can disagree.

Tolstóy's *Reply to the Synod's Edict of Excommunication* clearly discloses the gulf that separated him from the Orthodox Russo-Greek Church. That Church is now suffering tribulation. It can no longer persecute, but is itself suffering persecution, and in its tribulation it has produced noble examples

of men ready to suffer for their faith. One is reluctant at such a time to publish Tolstóy's indictment of it, but the opinions he formed with such labour and effort cannot be omitted, and if he is right that the teaching of the Church is the chief obstacle that hinders men from reaching a reasonable understanding of religion, so that Christian nations still periodically commit wholesale murder in insensate wars, it is a duty to challenge that Church both when it is supported by an Autocrat and when it is suppressed by a Dictator. It called itself the 'Orthodox' Russo-Greek Church, and when speaking of the Scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat, slew the prophets, and opposed the revelation of any fresh truth, Tolstóy called them 'the Orthodox' to emphasize the fact that those holding office and claiming ecclesiastical sanctity are often far removed from an understanding of God's truth.

*What is Religion?* is perhaps the most complete and finished statement among these essays, and it concludes by telling us of the men who 'as surely as fire sets the dry steppe alight, will set the whole world aflame and kindle all the hearts of men, withered by long lack of religion and now thirsting for a renewal of life'.

*Church and State* is an article put together by a copyist Tolstóy sometimes employed, from passages he had discarded while composing his lengthy and detailed *Criticism of Dogmatic Theology*. Tolstóy approved of the compilation and raised no objection to its publication. Like the *Appeal to the Clergy* and *The Restoration of Hell* it is a caustic indication of the ground of his disapproval of the Church, and it is evident that, though he had the Orthodox Russo-Greek Church primarily in view, his argument carries far beyond that, and applies to all who

accept the Church creeds, and even to some unorthodox Churches.

It may, in conclusion, not be out of place to record certain passages from talks I had with Tolstóy. He held that Kant's work is indispensable for us who live after him. There is no getting away from the fundamental difference between subjective and objective perceptions. But Kant's style is abominable, and he did not do all that is needed. A. Spir, a Russian who wrote in German and French, carried Kant's work forward. Tolstóy recommended a little book *Esquisses de Philosophie Critique* containing a concise statement of Spir's conclusions. That work did not entirely satisfy Tolstóy, but he was in fundamental agreement with it as far as it goes. Spir's work being but little known in England, it may be well to quote the following characteristic passages approved of by Tolstóy:

'The perception that God is neither the cause nor in any sense a sufficient reason for the existence of the world, and cannot be used to explain it, establishes the independence of physical science *vis-à-vis* of morality and religion. The perception that the physical world is abnormal, founded on a delusion, and that physical science has only a relative truth, establishes the independence and the primacy of morality and of religion *vis-à-vis* of physical science.'

'To sacrifice the moral to the physical, as is done at present, is to sacrifice the reality for a shadow; it is to commit a mistake which has to be expiated at a great price, for it is to sacrifice all that can give value to life.'

'One obligation that we owe to truth has never been recognized explicitly enough. The obligation not to lie, not to say what you do not believe to be true, is recognized; but the obligation to accept as true only what is satisfactorily proved to be so, is not recognized.'

To the trend of thought represented by Nietzsche, Tolstóy attached great and sinister importance. A movement of animalism showed itself in Europe at the Renaissance, but that revolt of man's lower

nature soon broke its force against the seriousness that then still lived in Church Christianity. A similar tendency is now reviving, expressing itself in the philosophy of Nietzsche and in the art of the decadents, but it now meets no such formidable breakwater: the Churches are too rotten to offer serious resistance to it.

Feeling that the only power capable of resisting the attacks of materialism and animalism is the inward light operating through man's reason and conscience, Tolstóy was ready to welcome all that shows how untenable are the positions which Churchmen still try to defend, and how inadequate the proofs they rely on. The following incident illustrates this. He had one day been reading *Vergleichende Uebersicht der Vier Evangelien* by Professor Verus, published by P. van Dyk, Leipzig, 1897. This delighted him.

'They are attacking the last of the outworks,' said he, 'and if they carry it, and demonstrate that Christ never was born, it will be all the more evident that the fortress of religion is impregnable. Take away the Church, the traditions, the Bible, and even Christ himself: the ultimate fact of man's knowledge of goodness, *i.e.* of God, directly through reason and conscience, will be as clear and certain as ever, and it will be seen that we are dealing with truths that can never perish—truths that humanity can never afford to part with.'

This may seem to some readers like an abandonment of the position Tolstóy held when he was writing *The Four Gospels* and *The Gospel in Brief*; but really it is only the same position viewed from the other side. He then maintained that what is essential in the Gospels derives authority not from supernatural revelation but from its correspondence with man's reason and conscience; and what he subsequently meant was that even though the case against the historic existence of Jesus should grow stronger and stronger and it should become more

and more evident that we do not know where the Gospels were composed, or when, or who wrote them—all this will in no way infringe the validity of that teaching and understanding of life which Tolstóy and many others have found in the Gospels, and which when once perceived can never be ignored.

‘I divide men,’ said Tolstóy, ‘into two lots. They are free-thinkers, or they are not-freethinkers. I am not speaking of the Freethinkers who formed a political party in Germany, nor of the agnostic English Freethinkers, but I am using the word in its simplest meaning. Freethinkers are those who are willing to use their minds without prejudice and without fearing to understand things that clash with their own customs, privileges, or beliefs. This state of mind is not common, but it is essential for right thinking; where it is absent, discussion is apt to become worse than useless. A man may be a Catholic, a Frenchman, or a capitalist, and yet be a freethinker; but if he put his Catholicism, his patriotism, or his interest, above his reason, and will not give the latter free play where those subjects are touched, he is not a freethinker. His mind is in bondage.’

AYLMER MAUDE.

## ON LIFE

L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus faible de la nature, mais c'est un roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l'univers entier s'arme pour l'écraser. Une vapeur, une goutte d'eau suffit pour le tuer. Mais quand l'univers l'écraserait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parce qu'il sait qu'il meurt: et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers n'en sait rien. Ainsi, toute notre dignité consiste dans la pensée. C'est de là qu'il faut nous relever, non de l'espace et de la durée. Travaillons donc à bien penser: voilà le principe de la morale.

PASCAL.

(Man is but a reed, the feeblest in nature, but he is a thinking reed. It is not necessary for the whole universe to arm itself to crush him. A vapour, a drop of water, is sufficient to slay him. But were the universe to crush him, man would still be nobler than that which kills him, for he knows that he dies, while the universe knows nothing of the advantage it has over him. Thus our whole dignity consists in thought. By that we should raise ourselves, and not by space and time. Let us therefore labour to think rightly: that is the principle of morality.)

Zwei Dinge erfüllen mir das Gemuth mit immer neuer und zunehmender Bewunderung und Ehrfurcht, je öfter und anhaltender sich das Nachdenken damit beschäftigt: der bestirnte Himmel über mir, und das moralische Gesetz in mir . . . Das erste fangt von dem Platze an, den ich in der aussern Sinnenwelt einnehme, und erweitert die Verknüpfung, darin ich stehe, ins unabsehlich Grosse mit Welten über Welten und Systemen von Systemen, ußerdem noch in grenzenlose Zeiten ihrer periodischen Bewegung, deren Anfang und Fortdauer. Das zweite fangt von meinem unsichtbaren Selbst, meiner Personlichkeit an, und stellt mich in einer Welt dar, die wahre Unendlichkeit hat, aber nur dem Verstande spürbar ist, und mit welcher ich mich, nicht wie dort in bloss zufälliger, sondern allgemeiner und nothwendiger Verknüpfung erkenne.

KANT, *Kritik der prakt. Vernunft, Beschluss.*

(Two things fill my consciousness with ever fresh and increasing wonder and awe the oftener and the more deeply my mind concerns itself with them: the starry heavens above



me, and the moral law within me. . . . The first begins at the place I occupy in external nature and extends the connexion in which I stand into infinite space, with its worlds on worlds and systems of systems, and beyond that into the limitless time of their periodic movements, their commencement and duration. The second begins in my unseen self, my personality, and places me in a world that has true infinity but which is perceptible only to the understanding, and with which I know myself to be connected not merely accidentally, as in the first case, but completely and inevitably.)

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another. JOHN xiii. 34.

### *Introduction*

LET us imagine a man whose only means of subsistence is a mill. This man, the son and grandson of a miller, knows well by tradition how to manage all parts of the mill so that it grinds satisfactorily. Without any knowledge of mechanics he adjusts the machinery as best he can, so that the flour is well ground and good and he lives and earns his keep.

But having heard some vague talk of mechanics, he begins to think about the arrangement of the mill and to observe what makes what turn.

From the mill-stones to the rind, from the rind to the shaft, from the shaft to the wheel, from the wheel to the sluice, to the dam, and to the water, he comes to the conclusion that everything depends on the dam and the river. And he is so delighted by this discovery that instead of testing the quality of the flour as he used to, and raising or lowering the mill-stones, clamping them, and tightening or loosening the belt, he begins to study the river. And his mill falls quite out of order. People begin to tell him he is making a mistake, but he disputes this and continues to reason about the river. And

he concerns himself so much and for so long a time with this, and discusses it so eagerly and hotly with those who point out the mistake in his way of thinking, that at last he convinces himself that the river is the mill itself.

To all proofs of the error of his reasoning such a miller will reply: 'No mill grinds without water, so to know the mill one must know how to let the water run, one must know the force of its current and where it comes from—in a word, to know the mill you must get to know the river.'

The miller's argument is logically irrefutable. The only way to undeceive him is to show him that what is most important in any argument is not so much the argument itself as the place it occupies, that is to say, that to think effectively it is essential to know what one should consider first and what later. He must be shown that a rational plan of activity differs from an irrational one in that its elements are arranged in the order of their importance: which should come first, second, third, tenth, and so on, while irrational plans lack that sequence. It is also necessary to show him that the decision of this order is not fortuitous, but depends on the purpose for which the activity is planned.

This ultimate aim also determines the sequence in which the separate reflections should be arranged so as to be sensible. An argument not connected with the end in view is absurd, however logical it may be.

The miller's aim is to grind well, and this aim, if he keeps it in view, will determine for him the indubitable order and sequence of his reflections about the mill-stones, the wheel, the dam, and the river.

Without such reference to their aim, the miller's reflections, however fine and logical and beautiful

in themselves, will be false, and, above all, meaningless: they will be like the speculations of Gógol's Kífa Mokíevich, who calculated what the thickness of an elephant's egg-shell would be if elephants were hatched from eggs, like birds.

And such, in my opinion, are the discussions of our contemporary science about life.

Life is the mill which man wishes to investigate. The purpose of a mill is to grind well, the purpose of life is to live it well. And man cannot with impunity lose sight of this aim of his researches for an instant. If he does, his arguments inevitably lose their place, and become like Kífa Mokíevich's speculations as to the gunpowder needed to crack an elephant's egg.

Man investigates life in order to make it better. Only thus have men studied it who have advanced humanity on the path of knowledge. But besides these true teachers and benefactors of mankind there have always been, and still are, reasoners who lose sight of the aim of the discussion and investigate the question of the origin of life instead—investigate what makes the mill go. Some declare that it is the water, others that it is the mechanism. The dispute grows warm, and becomes further and further removed from the purpose of the discussion, till it is supplanted by matters quite foreign to it.

There is an ancient jest about a dispute between a Jew and a Christian. The Christian, in reply to the intricate subtleties of the Jew, smacked him on his bald pate and asked him: What made the noise—your bald pate or the palm of my hand? And the dispute about faith gave way to a new and insoluble question.

Something similar has, from very ancient times, been going on parallel with humanity's real knowledge of the question of life.

Discussions concerning the origin of life have been known from very ancient times, as to whether it comes from a non-material origin or from various combinations of matter? And these discussions still continue, and one foresees no end to them, simply because the whole aim of the discussion has been left aside. Life is discussed apart from its aim, and by the word 'life' something is referred to that is not life, but is what it proceeds from or what accompanies it.

When speaking of life, not only in scientific books but even in conversation, people now refer not to what we all know—the life I am conscious of, the sufferings I fear and hate and the pleasures and joys I desire—but to something that may perhaps have arisen from a play of accidents in accord with certain physical laws, or perhaps from a cause that is a mystery.

The word *life* is now applied to something disputable, which lacks the chief characteristics of life: a consciousness of suffering and enjoyment and an aspiration towards welfare.

*La vie est l'ensemble des fonctions, qui résistent à la mort. La vie est l'ensemble des phénomènes, qui se succèdent pendant un temps limité dans un être organisé.*<sup>1</sup>

'Life is a dual process of composition and decomposition, general and at the same time uninterrupted. Life is a certain conjunction of heterogeneous changes occurring in sequence. Life is an organism in action. Life is a particular activity of an organic substance. Life is an adaptation of internal to external relations.'

Not to mention the inaccuracies and tautologies with which these definitions teem, their essence is

<sup>1</sup> Life is the aggregate of the functions which withstand death. Life is the aggregate of the phenomena that succeed one another for a limited period in an organized being.

always the same: they do not define what all men alike unquestionably understand by the word *life*, but certain processes and other phenomena which accompany life.

Most of these definitions cover a crystal in process of formation, some of them cover the activities of fermentation and decay, and all of them apply to each separate cell in my body, for which neither good nor evil exists. Certain processes that occur in crystals, in protoplasm, in the nucleus of protoplasm, and in the cells of my body and other bodies, are called by the name which to me is inseparably connected with the consciousness of an aspiration for my welfare.

To reason about certain conditions of life as if they were life itself, is the same as to discuss the river as if it were the mill.

Such discussions may be very necessary for some purposes, but do not touch the subject they are intended to discuss, and consequently the conclusions about life deduced from them cannot help being false.

The word *life* is very short and very clear, and everybody knows what it means. But just because that is so, we ought always to use it in this universally intelligible sense. For the meaning of the word is clear to everyone not because it has been very accurately defined by other words and concepts, but on the contrary because it expresses a fundamental conception from which many others, if not all others, are deduced. So to make deductions from it, we are bound first of all to take it in the central meaning it has for everybody. And as it seems to me, just this very thing has been overlooked by the disputants in regard to the concept of life. It has happened that the basic concept of life, not having been taken in its central meaning

to begin with, has, as a result of the controversies about it, been more and more drawn away from its generally recognized basis, and has eventually lost that primary meaning and received another that is inappropriate. What has happened is that the centre from which the circle was drawn has been abandoned and transferred to another point.

People dispute about whether there is life in a cell, or in protoplasm, or in still lower inorganic matter. But before disputing, we should ask ourselves whether we have a right to ascribe the idea of life to a cell.

We say, for instance, that there is life in a cell and that it is a living being. Yet the fundamental idea of human life and the idea of the life found in a cell, are not merely quite different but incompatible. The one conception excludes the other. I learn that my body is entirely composed of cells. I am told that these cells have the same property of life that I have, and are living beings like myself. But I am conscious of myself as a living being only because I feel myself, with all the cells of which I am composed, to be a single undivided living being. I am entirely composed of living cells, they tell me. To what then do I ascribe the property of life: to the cells or to myself? If I admit that the cells have life, I must eliminate from the concept of life the chief indication of my own life—the consciousness that I am a separate undivided living being. But if I admit that I have life as a separate individual, it is clear that I certainly cannot attribute the same properties to the cells of which my whole body is composed and of whose consciousness I know nothing.

Either I have life, and have in me a crowd of non-living particles called cells, or there is a conglomeration of living cells and my consciousness of life is not life but only an illusion.

We do not say that in the cells there is something which we call *trifle*, but say that they have life. We say 'life' because by that word we understand not some unknown X but a quite definite quantity we all call by the same name, and know only from within ourselves, as the consciousness we have of ourselves with the body inseparable from us, and so that conception is not applicable to the cells of which my body is composed.

Whatever investigations and observations a man may engage on, he ought, for the expression of his observations, to employ each word with the meaning all men indisputably attribute to it, and not some sort of conception he requires but which does not at all coincide with the fundamental conception familiar to everybody. If it is permissible to use the word 'life' to express indiscriminately the quality of a whole object and the quite different quality of all its component parts, as is done with the cells and the animal composed of the cells, then we may employ other words similarly, and say that since thoughts are expressed by words and words are composed of letters, and the letters of strokes, the drawing of strokes is the same as the expression of ideas, and so strokes may be called ideas.

It is, for instance, a most ordinary thing in the scientific world to hear and read reflections on the origin of life from the play of physical and mechanical forces.

One might say that a majority of scientific men hold to this—it is difficult to know what to call it—opinion; no, not opinion, paradox; no, not paradox, but say jest or riddle.

They assert that life originates from a play of physical and mechanical forces—those physical and mechanical forces which we call physical and mechanical only in contradiction to the idea of life.

Evidently the word *life* improperly applied to conceptions alien to it, by deviating more and more from its fundamental meaning has in this significance been removed so far from its centre that life is assumed to be there where, according to our conceptions, life cannot be. It is as though it were said that there is a circle or a sphere whose centre is exterior to its circumference.

In fact life, which I cannot present to myself otherwise than as a striving against evil and towards good, is transferred to a region where I can see neither good nor evil. Evidently the centre of the conception of life has been entirely displaced. Nor is that all: following the investigations of this something called *life*, I see that they hardly touch on any conceptions we are familiar with. I see a whole series of new concepts and words which have a conventional significance in the scientific language but which have nothing in common with existing ideas.

The concept of life known to me is taken not as all men understand it, nor do the conceptions deduced from it coincide with the customary conceptions, but new conventional conceptions appear, on which correspondingly invented appellations are bestowed.

Human language is more and more extruded from these scientific investigations and, instead of words being used as a means of expressing existing objects and ideas, a scientific Volapük is enthroned, differing from real Volapük only in that the latter applies general words to existing objects and concepts, whereas this scientific Volapük applies non-existent words to non-existent conceptions.

The only means of mental intercourse between men is by words, and for this intercourse to be



possible words have to be used so as to evoke in everybody a corresponding and definite meaning. If we may use words at random and with arbitrary meanings, it would be better not to speak at all, but to indicate everything by signs.

I admit that to settle the laws of the universe by mere deductions of reason without experiment and observation, is a false and unscientific path, that is, one that cannot yield true knowledge. But would it not be still worse to study the world's phenomena by experiment and observation and at the same time to be guided in those experiments and observations by conceptions that are neither fundamental nor general to everyone, but conventional, and to describe the results of these experiments by words to which different meanings can be attributed. The best chemist's shop will cause very great harm if the labels are stuck on the bottles according to the whim of the chemist and not according to their contents.

But I shall be told: Science does not set itself the task of studying the totality of life (including the will and the aspiration towards good and towards a spiritual world), it abstracts from the conception of life only those phenomena which are suitable for its experimental investigations.

That would be excellent, if correct. But we know that this is not at all how scientists of our day understand it. If we first of all recognized a conception of life in the essential meaning which all men understand, and if it were then clearly shown that positive science, setting aside all aspects of that conception except the one subject to external observation, examined the phenomena from that side only for which it has suitable methods of investigation—that would be all right and an entirely different matter. In that case the place science would occupy

and the conclusions we should reach on the basis of science would be quite different. But we must state facts as they are and not hide what we all know. Do we not know that the majority of the experimental-scientific investigators of life are fully convinced that they are studying not merely one side of life but the whole of it?

Astronomy, mechanics, physics, chemistry, and the other sciences, singly and collectively, deal each with the particular side of life subject to it, without coming to any conclusions about life generally. Only in their crude days of obscurity and indefiniteness did some of those sciences try to embrace all the phenomena of life from their own point of view and blundered by devising concepts and words of their own. This happened with astronomy when it was astrology, and with chemistry when it was alchemy. And the same thing happens now with this experimental evolutionary science, which while investigating one side or several sides of life, professes to study the whole of it.

Men with this false view of their science do not at all want to admit that only certain sides of life are subject to their investigation, and affirm that they will investigate the whole of life with all its phenomena by means of external experiment. 'If', they say, 'the *psychics*' (they are fond of this vague term of their Volapük) 'are as yet unknown to us, they will be known some day. By investigating one or several sides of the phenomena of life we shall get to know all sides. In other words, by examining an object very long and assiduously from one side, we shall be able to see it from all sides and even from the middle.'

However amazing may be this strange doctrine—explicable only by the fanaticism of superstition—it exists, and like every barbarous and fanatical

doctrine it produces a harmful effect, in that it directs the activity of man's thought in a false and vain direction.

Conscientious workers perish, having devoted their lives to the study of what is almost useless; people's physical forces are wasted by being directed where they are not needed; young generations perish, being directed to the very useless activity of a Kífa Mokíevich extolled as a very lofty service to humanity.

It is customary to say that science studies life in all its aspects. But that is just the point; every object has as many aspects as there are radii in a sphere, that is to say, an infinite number, and it is impossible to study all the sides. We must know which side is more important and necessary, and which less important and necessary. As it is impossible to approach an object from all sides at once, so it is impossible to study the phenomena of life from all sides at once. Whether we like it or not a sequence has to be established, and in that lies the whole crux of the matter. That sequence is supplied only through an understanding of life.

Only a correct understanding of life gives the proper meaning and direction to science in general and to each science in particular, placing them according to their significance in regard to life. If the understanding of life is not such as is implanted in us all, then the science itself will be false.

It is not what we call science that supplies our conception of life; it is our conception of life that determines what ought to be regarded as science. And so for science to be science we must first decide what is science and what is not, and for this our conception of life should be a clear one.

I will say frankly what I think. We all know the

fundamental dogma of this false experimental science: Matter and energy exist. Energy produces movement; mechanical movement is transformed into molecular movement and is expressed by heat, electricity, and nervous and cerebral activity. All the phenomena of life without exception are explained as interrelations of different energies. All this is fine, simple, clear, and, above all, convenient. So if there is anything lacking in this explanation that we so much wish for and that so simplifies our whole life, it must somehow be invented.

And this is my whole audacious thought: a great part of the energy of the impassioned activity of experimental science arises from a desire to devise all that is needed to confirm so convenient a notion.

In the activities of this science one sees not so much a desire to investigate the phenomena of life, as a single ever-present anxiety to prove the truth of their fundamental dogma. What efforts are spent on attempts to explain that the organic proceeds from the inorganic, and psychic activity from the organic processes! If the inorganic does not become organic, let us search the bottom of the sea and we shall find something we will call a nucleus, a moneron.

When it is not there, we will believe that it will be found—the more so as we have at our service an infinity of ages into which we can pack everything that (though it does not exist) our creed requires.

It is the same with the conversion of organic activity into psychic activity. We have not yet got it. But we believe that it will be, and all the efforts of the mind are directed to proving at least its possibility.

The discussion of what does not touch our life, namely the question of its origin (whether it be

animism, or vitalism, or some other special force), has hidden from men life's chief question—that question without which the idea of life loses its meaning—and has gradually brought the scientists, the men who should guide others, to the condition of a man who is walking and even hurrying, but has forgotten where he is going.

Perhaps I purposely try to overlook the immense results that science yields, travelling its present road. But no results counterbalance a false direction. Let us assume the impossible: that all that modern science wishes to learn about life and that (though without itself believing it) it says will be discovered—let us assume, I say, that all this is discovered and becomes as clear as day: that it becomes plain how organic matter arises from an adaptation of inorganic matter, and how physical energy is transmuted into feelings, will, and thought; and that all this is known not only to grammar-school boys, but even to village school children.

I know that such and such thoughts and feelings are produced by such and such movements. Well, what of it? Can I, or can I not, by means of such movements manage to evoke in myself such and such thoughts? And the question as to what thoughts and feelings I must evoke in myself and in others remains not merely unsolved but not even touched upon.

I know that the men of science find no difficulty in replying to this question. Its solution seems very simple to them, as the solution of a difficult question always does seem simple to a man who has not understood it. The problem of how to arrange life when it is in our power seems very simple to the scientists. They say: Arrange it so that people may satisfy their needs. Science is devising the means,

first of distributing regularly what is required for the satisfaction of human needs, and secondly of producing so much and so easily that all those needs will be easily satisfied, and then men will be happy.

And if you ask what is meant by needs and how they are limited, the reply is again very simple: Science is there to classify the physical, intellectual, aesthetic, and even the moral needs of man, and to define clearly for us which needs are legitimate and which are not and to what extent. It will settle this some day.

If you ask how science will be guided in deciding the legitimacy or illegitimacy of these needs, they boldly reply: By studying the needs. But the word 'needs' has only two meanings: either that of the conditions of existence (and the conditions of existence of any object are innumerable and consequently cannot all be studied), or that of a living creature's demands for welfare—which is perceivable and definable only by consciousness, and which consequently can still less be studied by experimental science.

There is an institution, or corporation, or shall we say an association, of men or of minds which is called science and is infallible. This will define all our needs in time.

Is it not evident that this solution of the question is only a paraphrase of the Messianic kingdom, in which the role of the Messiah is played by science; and that for this explanation to explain anything it is necessary to believe in the dogmas of science as implicitly as the Jews believe in the Messiah? And this is actually done by the orthodox scientists but with this difference, that the orthodox Jews who see in the Messiah God's messenger, may believe that he will by his power arrange everything excellently, while the orthodox scientists cannot by

the nature of the case believe that it is possible by means of an external study of needs to solve the one great question of life.

## I

*The fundamental contradiction of human life.*

MAN lives only for his own happiness—for his own good. If he does not feel a desire for his own welfare he no longer feels himself to be alive. Man cannot think of life without a wish for his own welfare. To live is for each man the same as to desire and seek for welfare: to desire and strive for welfare is to live.

Man feels life only in himself, in his own personality, and so at first it seems to him that the good he wishes for is only his individual good. It seems to him at first that he alone really lives. The life of other beings seems to him altogether different from his own—it presents itself to him as being only a semblance of life. Man knows the life of other beings only through observation, and only so does he know of their existence. He knows of the life of other beings only when he wishes to think of it, but of himself he knows, and cannot for an instant cease to know, that he is alive, and consequently only his own life seems real to each man. The life of other beings surrounding him seems to him only one of the conditions of his own existence. If he does not wish evil to others it is only because the sight of their suffering impairs his own well-being. If he wishes others well, he does not do so in at all the same way as for himself. He wishes well to others not that it should be well for them whose happiness he desires, but only that the good of others may augment his own welfare. What is important and necessary to man is good in the life he feels to be his own, that is, his own welfare.

But while striving to attain this welfare he notices that this very welfare depends on other beings, and observing and examining these other beings he sees that they all—both men and even animals—have the same conception of life as his own. Each of them like himself feels only its own life and its own well-being, and considers only its own life real and important and the life of all other beings merely a means for its own happiness. Man sees that, like himself, each living being must be prepared for the sake of its own little welfare to deprive all the other beings—including himself who is thus reasoning—of a greater good and even of life itself. And having understood this, man involuntarily reflects that if, as he cannot doubt, this is really the case, it follows that not merely one or a dozen creatures but all the innumerable creatures in the world, for the attainment by each of them of its own aim, are every moment ready to destroy him, for whom alone life exists. Having understood this, man sees that his personal welfare, in which alone he understands life, is not merely a thing not easy of attainment, but is something that will certainly be taken from him.

The longer he lives the more is this reflection confirmed by experience, and he sees that the life of the world—the life in which he participates—is composed of interrelated individuals who desire to destroy and devour one another, and far from existing for his welfare is on the contrary a great evil.

Nor is that all: even if a man is so favourably placed that he can successfully struggle against other individuals without fearing for himself; reason and experience soon show him that even those phantoms of happiness which he snatches from life in the form of personal pleasures are not welfare, but only as it were samples of welfare,



given him only to make him feel more keenly the sufferings that always accompany enjoyment. The longer a man lives the more clearly he sees that enjoyments become ever less and less, while weariness, satiety, troubles, and suffering, become greater and greater.

More than this: beginning to experience a weakening of his powers and the approach of sickness; and observing sickness, old age, and death, in other men; and seeing also that his own existence—in which alone he feels life really and fully—draws every hour and ever moment nearer to feebleness, old age, and death; and that besides being exposed to thousands of chances of destruction by other beings contending with him, and to ever-increasing sufferings, his life by its very nature is only a constant approach towards death—to the state in which together with his individual life every possibility of any personal welfare will certainly be destroyed—man sees that he, his personality, that which alone means life to him, is in continual strife with something it is impossible to resist—with the whole world; that he seeks enjoyments which yield only a semblance of happiness and always end in suffering, and that he wishes to retain life which cannot be retained.

He sees that he himself, his personality, that for which alone he desires welfare and life, cannot possess either welfare or life; and that the welfare and life he desires is possessed only by those beings, alien to him, whom he does not and cannot feel, and of whose existence he cannot and does not wish to know.

What is for him the most important of all and what alone he needs, that which as it seems to him alone really lives—his personality—is perishing and will become bones and worms and will cease to be;

while what for him is unnecessary and unimportant, that which he does not feel as living—the whole world of struggling and changing beings—is the real life that remains and will always live. So that the only life felt by him, and for the sake of which all his activity is undertaken, turns out to be something delusive and impossible; while the life outside him, which is unknown to him and which he does not feel and cares nothing for, is the only real life.

This life which he does not feel, alone has those properties he would like to have. And this is not an idea that presents itself to him at bad moments of depression, it is not a perception man can avoid. On the contrary it is such an obvious, indubitable truth that when once the thought of it has occurred to a man, or others have once explained it to him, he can never again get rid of it or eradicate it from his consciousness.

## II

*From the earliest times men have recognized the contradiction of life. Wise men who have enlightened humanity have given definitions of life which solve this intrinsic contradiction, but the Scribes and Pharisees divert men's attention from them.*

THE sole aim of life that at first presents itself to man is the welfare of his own personality, but welfare cannot exist for the personality, or if there be something in life resembling welfare, yet the life in which alone that welfare is possible—the life of the individual—is irresistibly drawn by every movement and by every breath towards suffering, evil, death, and destruction.

And this is so evident and so clear that every thinking man, young or old, educated or uneducated,

sees it. This thought is so simple and natural that it presents itself to every rational man and has been known to mankind since remote antiquity.

'The life of man as an individual, striving only for his own welfare amid an infinite number of similar individuals destroying each other and destroying themselves, is an evil and an absurdity—and the true life cannot be such.' That is what man has said to himself from the earliest times, and this inner contradiction of man's life was expressed with extraordinary force and clearness by the Hindu, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek, and Hebrew sages, and from antiquity man's reason has been directed to discerning a welfare for man which would not be destroyed either by strife among men, by sufferings, or by death. The whole advance of humanity, since we have knowledge of its existence, consists in the clearer and clearer elucidation of this pure welfare which strife, suffering, and death cannot destroy.

Since very ancient times and among most diverse peoples, the great teachers of humanity have revealed to man ever clearer definitions of life which solve its intrinsic contradiction, and have pointed out what true happiness and true life is. And since all men in this world are in the same condition, it follows that all find the same contradiction between their striving for personal welfare and their consciousness of the impossibility of attaining it, and consequently all the definitions of true happiness and therefore of true life revealed to man by the greatest human minds are in their essence identical.

'Life is the diffusion of that light which came down from heaven for man's blessing,' said Confucius six hundred years before Christ.

'Life is the wandering and perfecting of souls,

attaining ever greater and greater blessing,' said the Brahmins of that same period.

'Life is the abnegation of self to gain the bliss of Nirvana,' said Buddha, a contemporary of Confucius.

'Life is the path of meekness and humility for the attainment of blessedness,' said Lao-tsze, also a contemporary of Confucius.

'Life is what God breathed into the nostrils of man, that by fulfilling His law he might attain to what is good,' says the wisdom of the Hebrews.

'Life is that obedience to reason which gives happiness to man,' said the Stoics.

'Life is love of God and of your neighbour, which gives blessedness to man,' said Jesus, embracing in his definition all the former ones.

Such are the definitions of life which for thousands of years past, by indicating to man a real and indestructible blessedness, have solved the contradiction of human life and given it a reasonable meaning in place of a false and impossible happiness of the individual.

It is possible not to agree with these definitions, or to say that they might be expressed more clearly or exactly, but it is impossible not to see that they are such that their recognition abolishes the contradiction in life and gives it a reasonable meaning, by replacing the striving for an unattainable personal welfare by a different striving to obtain a good which neither suffering nor death can destroy. And we cannot help seeing also that these definitions which are theoretically correct are also confirmed by experience, and that millions and millions of people who have acknowledged this have in fact shown, and still show, the possibility of replacing efforts for individual welfare, by efforts for a welfare proof against sufferings and death.

But besides those who have understood and do

understand the definitions of life given to humanity by its great teachers, and who have lived by them, there always have been and still are an immense majority of men who during part of their life, and in some cases during the whole of it, have lived an entirely animal existence not only without understanding the definitions that solve the contradiction of human life, but without even seeing the contradiction. And there have always been and still are some among these, who thanks to their exceptional position in the world have considered themselves called on to guide humanity, and who not understanding the meaning of human life themselves have taught and still teach others about this life which they do not understand, declaring human life to be nothing but individual existence.

Such false teachers have always existed and still exist to-day. Some of them nominally profess the teaching of those enlighteners of humanity in whose traditions they have been trained, but not understanding its reasonable meaning they transform those doctrines into supernatural revelations about a past and future life, and content themselves with demanding the observance of ceremonies. This is the teaching of the Pharisees in the broadest sense of the word, that is to say, of men who teach that a life in itself irrational may be corrected by belief in another life obtainable by the performance of external rites.

The others, not admitting the possibility of any other life than that which they see, deny all miracles and everything supernatural, and declare boldly that man's life is nothing but his animal existence from birth to death. Such is the doctrine of the Scribes, the people who teach that there is nothing irrational in the life of man as an animal.

Both these classes of false teachers, though in

each case their teaching is based on one and the same coarse failure to understand the fundamental contradiction of human life, have always been hostile to one another and have filled the world with their quarrels, by these very disputes concealing from men those definitions of life, given to humanity thousands of years ago, which reveal the path to true welfare.

The Pharisees, not understanding the definition of life given to man by the masters in whose traditions they were brought up, replace it by their own false teaching of a future life, and at the same time they try to conceal from men the definitions of life given by other enlighteners of humanity, presenting these to their disciples in very gross and cruel perversions, thinking thereby to confirm belief in the irrational and false interpretations they have substituted for the essence of the true teaching.<sup>1</sup>

The Scribes, without even a suspicion of the reasonable ground on which the doctrines of the Pharisees have arisen, simply reject all teaching of a future life, and boldly assert that all those teachings have no foundation but are merely survivals of coarse customs born of ignorance, and that the progress of humanity consists in not asking oneself any questions about life outside the limits of man's animal existence.

### III

#### *The delusions of the Scribes.*

STRANGELY enough the surest indication of the importance of the teachings of mankind's

<sup>1</sup> That the reasonable meaning of the definition of life given by all enlighteners of humanity is identical is not regarded by the Pharisees (as it should be) as the best proof of the truth of that doctrine, since it shatters men's faith in the unreasonable and false interpretations they have substituted for the essence of the doctrine they undertake to teach.—L. T.

greatest intellects—the fact that those teachings have so impressed men by their sublimity that the mass of the people has generally ascribed a supernatural character to them and acclaimed their founders as demigods—is, in the opinion of the Scribes, the best proof that those teachings are fallacious and out of date.

The fact that the unimportant teachings of Aristotle, Bacon, Comte, and others, have always remained the property of a small number of readers and admirers, and on account of their falsity were never able to influence the masses, and consequently have not suffered from superstitious distortions and accretions, is regarded as a proof of their truth. But the teachings of the Brahmins, of Buddha, Zoroaster, Lao-tsze, Confucius, Isaiah, and Christ, are regarded as superstitions and delusions, simply because they have transformed the lives of millions of men.

The Scribes are not at all disturbed by the fact that milliards of men have lived and do live by these 'superstitions' because even in their distorted form they answer the question regarding the true welfare of life, nor by the fact that these doctrines are not merely shared by the best men of all ages but serve as a foundation for their thinking, while the theories accepted by the Scribes are shared only by themselves, are continually contested, and often only last for a couple of decades—being forgotten as quickly as they arise.

The false direction of the studies followed by contemporary society is shown most clearly by the place occupied in it by the doctrines of those great teachers of life by which humanity has lived and been moulded and continues to live and be moulded. In the section of statistical information the books of reference state that there are now a

thousand different religions professed by the inhabitants of the globe. Among these religions Buddhism, Brahminism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Christianity, are supposed to be included. A thousand religions! And men of our day sincerely believe that statement. There are a thousand religions and they are all absurd, so why should we study them? And these same men are ashamed if they do not know the latest utterance of the wisdom of Herbert Spencer, Helmholtz, and others; while of the Brahmins, of Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tsze, Epictetus, and Isaiah, they may perhaps know the names, but sometimes hardly know even that. It does not enter their heads that the religions professed in our day are nothing like a thousand, but only three: the Chinese, the Hindu, and the Hebrew-Christian (with its outgrowth—Mohammedanism) and that the books of these religions can be bought for ten shillings and read in a fortnight, and that in those books—by which all humanity (except seven per cent. of people almost unknown to us) has lived and is living—is contained all human wisdom, all that has made humanity what it is.

Not only do the masses not know these teachings, the educated do not know them unless they happen to be their speciality, and professional philosophers do not consider it necessary to glance at those books. Why indeed study those men who have solved the contradiction of life that reasonable men know to exist, and who have defined what is the true welfare and life of man? The Scribes, not understanding the contradiction (to solve which is the chief aim of a reasonable life), boldly affirm that as they do not see it there is no contradiction, and that the life of man is limited to his animal existence.

Those who see, understand and describe what they



see before them: the blind man goes poking about with his stick and declares that there is nothing but what the stick reveals to him.

#### IV

*The doctrine of the Scribes takes the visible manifestations of man's animal existence and from them makes deductions as to the purpose of his life—substituting them for the conception of man's whole life as revealed to him by his consciousness.*

'LIFE is what takes place in a living being from birth till death. A man, a dog, or a horse, is born: each has his individual body, and this individual body lives, and then dies, decomposes, and passes into other beings, and the former being no longer exists. Life was, and life has ended: the heart beats, the lungs breathe, the body does not decompose, and by this we know that the man, the dog, or the horse, lives; the heart stops beating, the lungs cease to breathe, the body begins to decompose, and then we know that death has come and life is over. Life then is that which takes place in the body of a man, as in that of an animal, in the interval between birth and death. What can be clearer?'

That is how life has always been regarded and always is regarded by the grossest and most ignorant men barely emerging from an animal condition. And now in our day the doctrine of the Scribes which calls itself science, takes this same gross and primitive conception of life to be the one true representation. Availing itself of all those instruments of external knowledge which humanity has acquired, this false doctrine wants systematically to lead man back into the mist of ignorance from

which with so much effort and labour he was emancipated thousands of years ago.

'We cannot define life by our consciousness,' says this doctrine. 'We go astray when we examine it in ourselves. The conception of good, the striving towards which in our consciousness constitutes our life, is an illusive mirage, and life cannot be recognized in this consciousness. To understand life we must observe its manifestations as movements of matter. Only by these observations and by the laws deduced from them shall we find the law of life itself and the law of the life of man.'<sup>1</sup>

And so the false teaching—taking man's visible animal existence and substituting it for the conception of his whole life as known to him in his consciousness—begins to examine these visible phenomena, at first in a living man, then in animals generally, then in plants, then in matter, continually asserting while it does so that it is not only certain manifestations of life, but life itself that is

<sup>1</sup> True science, knowing its place and consequently its subject, is modest and therefore powerful, and has never spoken in that way.

The science of physics speaks of the laws and relation of forces without setting itself the question of what force itself is, or trying to explain its nature. The science of chemistry speaks of the relation of matter, without setting itself the question of what matter is or trying to define its nature. The science of biology speaks of the forms of life, without setting itself the question of what life itself is or trying to define its essence. Force, matter, and life, are accepted by the natural sciences not as objects of study but as axiomatic bases taken for other fields of knowledge on which the structure of each separate science is reared. That is how true science regards the subject, and such science cannot have a harmful and brutalizing influence on men in general. But falsely philosophizing science does not regard it in that way. 'We study matter and force and life; and since we study them we can know them,' it says, not considering that they are studying neither matter, nor force, nor life, but only their relation and form.—L. T.

being studied. The observations are so complex, so diverse, so confused, and so much time and effort is spent on them, that people by degrees forget the initial mistake made in taking part of the subject for the whole of it, and at last fully convince themselves that the study of the visible properties of matter, of plants, and of animals, really is the study of life itself, that life which is known to man only in his consciousness.

It is like the tactics of a man who shows a shadow-graph and wishes to keep up the delusions of the spectators.

'Don't look anywhere,' says the showman, 'except where the shadow appears, and above all don't look at the object itself—there is no object, only its reflection.'

That is just what is done by the false science of the Scribes of our age who connive at the sentiments of the crowd and regard life apart from its chief definition—the striving after good which is revealed only in man's consciousness.<sup>1</sup> Starting directly from a definition of life independent of the striving after good, false science observes the aims of living beings, and finding in them aims that are alien to man, imposes them upon him.

The aim of living things under this external observation, presents itself as being the preservation of the individual, the preservation of the species, reproduction, and the struggle for existence; and just this imaginary aim of existence is foisted upon man.

False science having taken for its starting-point a belated conception of life from which the contradiction in human life (which furnishes its chief attribute) cannot be seen—this pseudo-science in its latest deductions reaches the conclu-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I: On the false definition of life.

sion demanded by the vulgar majority of mankind, a recognition of the possibility of good for the individual personal life; the recognition for man of the blessedness of animal life alone.

False science goes even beyond the demands of the common herd for whom it wishes to find an explanation of life. It even affirms what man's consciousness rejects with its first gleams of perception: the conclusion that the life of man, as of any animal, consists in the struggle for the existence of his person, his race, and his species.<sup>1</sup>

## V

*The false teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees do not supply an explanation of the meaning of life, nor do they give any guidance as to how to live. They furnish no guidance for life beyond the force of inertia, which has no rational explanation.*

'THERE is no need to define life: everybody knows what it is, and that's enough. So let us live!' say people, supported in their delusion by the false teachings. And not knowing what life is and in what its welfare lies, it seems to them that they live; just as it may seem to a man borne irresistibly along by the waves that he is swimming towards the place to which he wishes and needs to go.

A child is born in want or in wealth and receives the education of the Scribes or Pharisees. For the child or the youth neither the contradictions of life nor questions about them as yet exist, and so neither the explanation of the Pharisees nor of the Scribes is necessary to him, nor can they guide his life. He learns only by the example of the people

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix II.

around him, and this example, whether of Pharisees or Scribes, is the same: both live merely for the satisfaction of their personal life and teach him to do the same.

If his parents are in need, he learns from them that the aim of life is to get as much food and money as possible for the least possible work, so that the animal personality may fare as well as it can. If the child is born in wealth, he learns that the aim of life is riches and honours so that the time may be passed as agreeably and gaily as possible.

The poor man wants all the knowledge he can obtain only to improve his personal well-being. And all the knowledge of science and of the arts that a rich man acquires—in spite of all the grand things said about their importance—he needs only to banish boredom and to pass the time pleasantly. The longer each of them lives the more thoroughly does he absorb the ruling ideas of the men of the world. They get married and raise a family, and eagerness to acquire welfare for the animal life is increased by the justification of the family: the struggle with others becomes fiercer and the habit (the inertia) of living only for personal welfare increases.

Even if doubt of the reasonableness of such a life occurs either to the poor man or the rich one, if a question should occur to either of them as to the reason for this aimless struggle for existence which their children will continue, and why they pursue this illusive chase after enjoyments which end in suffering both for them and for their offspring, there is little chance of their coming to know those definitions of life given to humanity long long ago by its great teachers, who thousands of years before they were born found themselves in a like condition.

The doctrines of the Pharisees and Scribes hide these definitions so carefully that very few are able to see them.

The one set, the Pharisees, meet the question: 'Why is this life so wretched?' with the reply: 'Life is wretched—it always was and always must be. The good of life is not in the present but in the past—before birth; and in the future—after death.' The Brahmin, the Buddhist, the Taoist, the Hebrew, and the Christian Pharisees always say this same thing: 'The present life is an evil. The explanation of this evil is in the past, in the beginning of the world and of man, and the correction of the evil which exists is in the future beyond the grave. All that man can do to obtain happiness, not in this life but in the next, is to believe in the doctrines we impart and to perform the rites we ordain.'

And a doubter, seeing the falsity of this explanation by the life of all who live for personal welfare and by the life of the Pharisees themselves, who live for the same end, without deeply examining the meaning of their reply simply disbelieves them and turns to the Scribes.

'All the teachings about any other life than this which we see in an animal is the fruit of ignorance,' say the Scribes. 'All your doubts as to the reasonableness of your life are idle fancies. The life of the worlds, of the earth, of man, of animals, of plants, have their laws, and we study them and investigate the origin of the worlds and of man, of animals and plants, and of all matter; we investigate also what is in store for the worlds, how the sun will cool down, and so on, and what has been and will be with man and with every animal and plant. We can show and prove that everything has been and will be as we say. Our investigations also promote man's welfare. But of you and of your aspiration towards good we

can tell you nothing except what you know without us. You are alive, so live as you find best.'

And the doubter, having received no reply to his question from either the one or the other, remains as he was before with no guidance for life except his personal impulses.

Some of the doubters, following Pascal's reasoning, say to themselves: 'What if the things the Pharisees threaten us with for not obeying their injunctions are really true?'—and in their spare time fulfil all those instructions ('There is no loss, and the gain may be great'), while others, agreeing with the Scribes, simply deny any other life and flatly reject all religious ceremonies, saying to themselves: 'Not I alone, but everyone, has lived and does live so—what will be, will be.' And this difference gives advantage neither to the one nor the other. They both remain without any explanation of the meaning of their present life.

Yet one has to live.

The life of man is a series of actions from getting up to going to bed: every day he has incessantly to choose out of hundreds of possible acts those he will perform. Neither the teaching of the Pharisees (which explains the mysteries of a heavenly life) nor the teaching of the Scribes (investigating the origin of worlds and of men and forming conclusions as to their future fate) supplies any guidance for man's actions. Yet man cannot live without guidance in the choice of his actions, and so he involuntarily submits, not to reason, but to that external guidance of life which has always existed in every human society.

That guidance has no reasonable explanation, but it is what prompts the enormous majority of the actions of men. It is the habit of social life which governs men the more completely the less

they understand the meaning of their life. It cannot be definitely expressed since it is composed of most heterogeneous things and actions differing widely according to time and place. For a Chinaman it is candles on the little boards of his parents, for a Mohammedan it is pilgrimages to certain places, for a Hindu it is a certain number of words of prayer, for a military man it is fidelity to the flag and the honour of his uniform, for a man of the world it is the duel,<sup>1</sup> for the mountaineer it is the vendetta: it is the custom of eating certain foods on certain days; it is a special sort of education for children; it is the paying of visits; it is a certain arrangement of the house, certain ways of celebrating funerals, births, and weddings; it is an infinite number of affairs and actions which fill a man's whole life. It is what is called 'propriety', 'custom', and—oftenest of all—'duty' or even 'sacred duty'.

And it is to this guidance, apart from the explanations of life offered by the Scribes and Pharisees, that the majority of men submit. From childhood a man sees around him people performing these acts with full assurance and outward solemnity, and as he has no rational explanation of his life he not only begins to do these same things himself but tries to ascribe a rational meaning to them. He wishes to believe that the people who do these things know why they do them and what for. And so he tries to convince himself that these actions have a sensible meaning, and that the explanation, though not known to him, is clear to other people. But most of those other people, having no reasonable explanation of life, are in exactly the same position as himself. They, too, only do these things because they think that others who have an

<sup>1</sup> Duels were still in vogue in Russia when this was written.  
—A. M.



explanation demand that they shall do them. And so, involuntarily deceiving one another, men not merely accustom themselves more and more to doing things that have no reasonable meaning, but also accustom themselves to thinking that these things have some mysterious meaning unintelligible to them. And the less they understand the meaning of the things they do, and the more questionable these things are, the more do they attach importance to them and the more solemnly do they perform them. Both the rich and the poor do what is done by others around them and call it 'doing their duty' or their 'sacred duty', and quiet themselves with the thought that what has been done for so long by so many people and is so highly esteemed by them, must be the real business of life. And up to extreme old age, even till death itself, men live trying to assure themselves that if they do not know what they live for, other people do—and these very people know it just as little as those who rely on them.

Newcomers enter into existence, are born, grow up, and seeing this hurly-burly of existence called life in which grey-haired old men, esteemed and surrounded by people's respect, take part, assure themselves that this insensate bustle is really life and that there is no other, and they go away after jostling one another on its threshold. They are like a man who never having seen an assembly and noticing an animated, crowding throng at the entrance, decides that this is the assembly itself, and after being jostled about on the threshold returns home with bruised ribs fully assured that he has taken part in the assembly.

We tunnel through mountains and fly round the world; we have electricity, microscopes, telephones, wars, parliaments, philanthropy, party politics,

universities, learned societies, museums: is not that life?

All the complex seething activity of men, with their commerce, wars, means of communication, sciences, and arts, is for the most part only participation in a distracted crush on the threshold of life.

## VI

*The cleavage of consciousness in men of our world.*

'VERILY, verily, I say into you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God: and they that hear shall live.'

And that time is coming. However much a man may assure himself and however much he may be assured by others that life can only be good and reasonable beyond the grave, or that an individual life can be good and reasonable, he cannot believe it. He feels in his innermost soul an unquenchable demand for a good life with a reasonable meaning. But a life with no other aim than a life beyond the grave or an impossible individual welfare, is an evil and an absurdity.

Live for a future life? says a man to himself. But if this life, this mere sample of life that I know—my present life—must be senseless, that not only fails to prove to me the possibility of another, reasonable life, on the contrary it convinces me that life in its very essence is meaningless, and that none but a senseless life is possible.

Live for oneself? But my individual life is an evil and an absurdity. Live for the family? For the commonwealth? For the fatherland? Or even for humanity? But if my individual life is calamitous and senseless, every other human personality is equally senseless, and an infinite number of senseless and irrational personalities will not form a single

good and reasonable life. Live for oneself without knowing why, and doing what others do? But then I know that those others, like myself, do not know why they are doing what they do.

The time comes when rational consciousness outgrows the false doctrines, and man halts in the midst of life and demands an explanation.<sup>1</sup>

Only a rare man lacking contact with men of other ways of life, or one engaged in a constant and intense struggle with nature for the maintenance of his physical existence, can believe that the performance of the senseless things which he calls his duty, can be the real duty of his life.

The time is coming and is already here when these impostures, one of which demands the renunciation (in words) of this life in order to prepare for a future life, and the other the recognition of personal animal existence alone as life, and of so-called duty as the business of life—the time has come when these impostures have become plain to the majority of men, and when only those crushed by want, or stupefied by a life of lust, can go on living without feeling the senselessness and wretchedness of their existence.

More and more often do people awaken to a rational consciousness and come to life in their tombs and, despite the efforts people make to hide it from themselves, the fundamental contradiction of human life presents itself to the majority of men with terrible clearness and force.

‘My whole life is a seeking for good for myself,’ says an awakening man to himself, ‘but my reason tells me that this good for myself cannot exist, and that whatever I may do, and whatever I may achieve, it will all have one and the same end—suffering, death, and destruction. I wish for what

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III.

is good. I wish for life. I wish for a reasonable meaning. But in me and in all around me is evil, death, and senselessness. What am I to do? How live? What am I to do?' And there is no answer.

He looks around him and seeks for an answer to his question but does not find it. He finds around him teachings which answer questions he never asked, but there is no answer in the surrounding world to the question he has put to himself. There is only the bustle of people who without knowing why, are doing what others are doing, also without knowing why.

Everybody lives as if unconscious of the wretchedness of his situation and the senselessness of his activities. 'Either *they* are senseless or *I* am,' says the man who is awakening. 'But they cannot all be senseless, so it must be I. But no, the reasonable self which is saying this to me cannot be senseless. Though it is alone against the whole world I cannot but believe it.'

And man recognizes himself as alone in the world with these terrible questions which rend his soul. But he has to live.

One self, his personality, bids him live. But another self, his reason, says: 'You cannot live.'

The man feels that he is divided. And this division torments and rends his soul.

It seems to him that his reason is the cause of this dissension and suffering.

Reason, that highest faculty of man, essential for his life, which gives him—a naked helpless creature amid the destructive forces of nature—the means of existence and enjoyment: this same faculty poisons his life.

In all other living creatures around him the faculties natural to them are indispensable to them, are common to them all, and promote their

welfare. Plants, insects, animals, conforming to their own law, live a good, joyful, peaceful life. Yet in man the highest faculty of his nature produces a condition so tormenting that often—and nowadays more and more frequently—he cuts the Gordian knot of his life and kills himself simply to escape from the strain of the cruel inner contradiction produced by his rational consciousness; a strain which in our time has reached the highest degree of tension.

## VII

*The discord of consciousness results from confusing the animal life with the human.*

It seems to a man that the rational consciousness that has awakened in him divides and arrests his life, and this is so because he regards as his life something that was not, is not, and could not be, his life.

Having been educated and grown up in the false teachings of our world which confirm him in the conviction that his life is nothing but his individual existence which began at his birth, it seems to him that he began to live when he was a baby and a child and lived on without a break as a youth and an adult. He lived, it seems to him, for a long time and has lived without a break, till now suddenly he has reached a time when it has become indubitably clear that it is impossible to live as he has lived hitherto and that his life is arrested and torn asunder.

The false doctrine has confirmed him in the idea that his life is the interval of time between birth and death, and looking at the visible life of the animals, he has confused the idea of this visible life with his own consciousness, and is fully convinced that this visible life is his real life.

But his awakened reasonable consciousness, by

announcing demands that his animal life cannot satisfy, shows him the falsity of his conception of life, though the false doctrines with which he is imbued prevent him from recognizing his mistake: he cannot renounce his conception of life as an animal existence, and it seems to him that his life has come to a stop through the awakening of his reasonable consciousness. But what he calls his life—that which seems to him to be arrested—has never existed. What he calls his life, his existence from birth, has never been his life. His idea that he has lived all the time from his birth to the present moment is an illusion of consciousness such as is experienced in a dream. Up to the time of awakening there were no dreams: they all formed themselves at the moment of awaking. Similarly until the awakening of the reasonable consciousness there was no life. The conception of his past life formed itself at his awakening to reasonable consciousness.

During infancy the man lived like an animal, having no idea of life. If he had only lived for ten months he would never have become conscious either of his own or of any other life; he would have known as little about life as if he had died in his mother's womb. And not only an infant, but an insane adult or a complete idiot is not conscious that he or other beings live, and so they have no human life.

Human life begins only with the appearance of a reasonable consciousness—the very thing that reveals to man his life in the present and in the past and the life of other entities, and all the suffering and death that inevitably results from the relations of these entities—the very thing that produces in him the negation of the good of the personal life and the contradiction which, as it seems to him, arrests his life.

Man wishes to define his life by time as he defines all visible existence outside himself, and suddenly a life awakens in him which does not coincide with the time of his physical birth, and he does not want to believe that what is not defined by time can be life. But however much he may seek in time for the point from which he can count the beginning of his rational life, he will never find it.<sup>1</sup>

In his recollections man will never find that point, that beginning of his reasonable consciousness. It seems to him that reasonable consciousness always existed within him. If he does find something resembling a beginning of that consciousness he certainly does not find it in his physical birth but in a region having nothing in common with that physical birth. The commencement of his rational birth appears to him as being quite different from his physical birth. Asking himself about the origin of his reasonable consciousness he never imagines that, as a rational creature, he is the son of his father or his mother, and the grandson of his grandfathers and grandmothers, born in such

<sup>1</sup> Nothing is more common than to hear discussions about the origin and development of human life and of life generally in time. People who so discuss it imagine that they are on the firmest ground of reality, yet nothing is more fantastic than discussions about the evolution of life in time. It is as if a man, wishing to measure a line, did not measure from the known point on which he is standing, but from an endless line selected points at arbitrary distances from himself, and from these measured the distance to himself. Is not that just what people do who discuss the origin and development of life in man? Indeed, where on the endless line from the past life of man can one take that arbitrary point from which to begin the fantastic history of the evolution of this life? Is it at the birth or at the conception of the child, or of his parents, or yet farther back in the primeval animal and the protoplasm, in the first fragment that detached itself from the sun? All these reasons are most arbitrarily fantastic—they are mensuration without a measure.—L. T.

and such a year: he is conscious of being, not anyone's son, but united in one with the consciousness of reasonable beings differing completely from him in time and place, and who may have lived thousands of years ago at the other end of the earth. In his reasonable consciousness man does not even see any parentage, but recognizes his oneness, beyond time and space, with other reasonable consciousnesses so that they enter into him and he into them. It is reasonable consciousness awakening in man that checks, as it were, that semblance of life which misguided men take to be true life: to those misguided men it seems that their life is stopping just when it is actually awakening.

### VIII

*The discord and contradiction are only apparent: they are the result of false doctrine.*

ONLY the false teaching in which men are educated and brought up, and which presents human life as being merely an animal existence from birth to death, produces the agonizing feeling of discord men experience at the emergence in themselves of rational consciousness.

It seems to a man suffering from that error that life has been sundered in him.

He knows that life is one, yet feels it to be two. A man crossing his fingers and rolling a marble between them knows that it is a single marble, but feels it as two. Something similar occurs with a man who has contracted a wrong conception of life.

The man's reason is falsely directed. He has been taught to regard as life only his physical personal existence—which cannot be life.

With this false conception of an imaginary life he looks at life and suddenly perceives that there



are two lives—the one he had imagined and the other which is real.

To such a man it seems that the denial his rational consciousness makes of the good of personal existence and its demand for a different good, is something unnatural and morbid.

But for man as a reasonable being the denial of the possibility of individual welfare and of personal life is an inevitable consequence of the conditions of individual life and of the nature of the rational consciousness that is united with it. The renunciation of the welfare of individual life is for a reasonable being as natural a function of his life as for a bird to fly with its wings instead of running with its feet. If a fully fledged bird runs with its feet that does not prove that it is unnatural for it to fly. If around us we see men with unawakened consciousness who consider that their life lies in the welfare of their personality, that does not prove that it is unnatural for a man to live a rational existence. The grievous tension that now accompanies a man's awakening to the true life natural to him is only caused by the false teaching of the world which tries to convince men that the mirage of life is life itself, and that the emergence of true life is a violation of it.

With men of our world, entering on true life, something happens resembling what happens to a girl from whom the nature of woman has been concealed. At the first appearance of the signs of womanhood, such a girl mistakes this condition, which calls her to a future family life with the duties and the joys of motherhood, for an unhealthy and unnatural condition reducing her to despair.

A similar despair is felt by men of our world at the first symptoms of their awakening to true human life.

A man in whom the rational consciousness is awakened, but who still regards his life from an individual point of view, finds himself in the same agonizing condition as would an animal which, considering its life to be merely the movement of matter, refused to recognize the law governing its individuality, and saw its life only as a submission to the laws of matter which act without its efforts. Such an animal would experience a cruel inward contradiction and division. Conforming only to the laws of matter it would consider that life consisted only in lying down and breathing, but its individuality would demand something more: nutrition and the reproduction of the species. So it would seem to the animal that it experienced a division and contradiction. 'Life', it would think, 'consists in submitting to the laws of gravity, that is, in not moving and in lying still and submitting to those chemical changes which take place in the body. But I do all this, and yet feel compelled to move about, to feed myself, and to seek a mate.'

The animal would suffer and would feel in this state a cruel contradiction and division. And that is what happens to a man taught to regard the lower law of his life, the animal individuality, as the real law. The higher law of his being, the law of his reasonable consciousness, demands something else from him, while life around him and the false teaching he has received hold him in deception; and he feels a contradiction and discord.

But just as the animal to cease to suffer must recognize as its law not the lower law of matter but the law of its individuality, and obeying it must utilize the laws of matter for the satisfaction of that individuality, even so the awakened man must recognize his life not in the lower law of individuality but in the higher law he finds in his reasonable

consciousness and which includes the first law; and then the contradiction is eliminated and his individuality will freely submit to the reasonable consciousness and will serve it.

## IX

### *The birth of true life in a man.*

IN examining life in time, and observing its appearance in the human being, we see that true life is from the first inherent in man as it is in a grain of corn, and a time comes when it shows itself.

True life shows itself in this, that the animal personality impels man to seek its own welfare, but reasonable consciousness shows him the impossibility of personal welfare and indicates a different one. The man strains his sight towards this other welfare pointed out to him at a distance, but is unable to perceive it: he does not at first believe in it and reverts to his personal welfare. Yet reasonable consciousness, though it indicates its happiness so indefinitely, shows the impossibility of personal welfare so indubitably and convincingly that the man again renounces it and scans this new welfare pointed out to him. The reasonable welfare is not yet visible to him, but his personal welfare is so certainly destroyed that it is impossible to continue to live his personal existence, and a new relation between his animal and his reasonable consciousness begins to establish itself. The man begins to be born to true human life.

Something occurs similar to what happens in the material world at every birth. The fruit is not born because it wants to be born, because it is better for it to be born, or because it knows that it is good to be born, but because it is mature and cannot continue its former existence: it must follow the course

of its new life, not so much because the new life calls it as because its former existence has become impossible.

Reasonable consciousness, imperceptibly developing in his personality, reaches a stage at which personal life becomes impossible.

That takes place which happens at every birth: there is the same destruction of the seed—of the previous form of life—and the appearance of a new growth; the same apparent struggle between the previous form of the seed which is decomposing and the growth of the new shoot; and the same nutrition of the new growth at the expense of the decomposing seed. For us the difference between the birth of reasonable consciousness and the visible physical conception lies in this, that while in a physical birth in time and space we see for what, and how, and when, a being is born from the germ and know that the seed is the fruit, and that from the seed, under certain conditions, there will come a plant which will flower and then bear fruit similar to the seed (the whole cycle of life being accomplished before our eyes)—we do not see the growth of reasonable consciousness in time and do not see it accomplished. We do not see the growth and accomplishment of reasonable consciousness because it is we ourselves who accomplish it: our life is nothing but the birth of that invisible thing which is born in us and which we therefore cannot possibly see.

We cannot see the birth of this new thing, this new relation of reasonable consciousness to the animal self, just as the seed cannot see the growth of its stalk. When reasonable consciousness emerges from its hidden condition and becomes manifest to us, it seems to us that we are experiencing a contradiction. But there is no contradiction, just as there is none in the germinating seed. In the

germinating seed we only see that life which was formerly contained in the seed is now in its sprout. And just so there is no contradiction in the man whose rational consciousness is aroused, but only the birth of a new being, a new relation of reasonable consciousness to the animal.

If a man exists without being aware that other people live, without knowing that enjoyments cannot satisfy him and that he will die—he is not even aware that he lives, and thus there is no contradiction.

But if a man has come to see that there are other individuals such as himself, that sufferings await him, that his existence is a slow death, if his reasonable consciousness has begun to decompose his individual existence, he can no longer consider his life as centred in this decomposing personality, but must inevitably transfer it to the new life which is opening out before him. And so there is again no contradiction, as there is none in the seed that sends out a shoot and then decomposes.

## X

*Reason is the law man is conscious of, in conformity with which he must live.*

MAN's true life, which shows itself in the relationship of his reasonable consciousness to his animal personality, begins only when the sacrifice of his animal personality commences. And this sacrifice begins when his reasonable consciousness awakes.

But what is this reasonable consciousness? John's Gospel begins with the saying that the Logos (which means reason, wisdom, word) is the beginning, that in it is everything and everything comes from it; and therefore reason—that which defines everything—cannot itself be defined.

Reason cannot be defined, and we have no need to define it, for not only do we all know it but it is the one thing we do know. In communing with one another we are convinced beforehand, more than of any other thing, that reason is obligatory for us all. We are all convinced that reason is the sole basis uniting all living things. Reason is what we know most surely and first of all, so that everything we know in the world we know only because of its conformity to the laws of this reason which is indubitably known to us. We know and cannot help knowing reason. It is impossible not to know it, for reason is the law by which reasonable beings—men—must inevitably live. Reason for man is the law by which his life is accomplished, just such a law as that for the animal by which it feeds itself and multiplies; as the law for the plant by which grass and trees blossom and bear fruit; as the law of the heavenly bodies by which the earth and the planets move. And the law we know in ourselves as the law of our life is the same law by which all the external phenomena of the universe are ordered, only with this difference, that in ourselves we know this law as that which we must ourselves fulfil, while in external phenomena we know it as the law by which things take place without our participation. All that we know of the world is only subordination to the law of reason, visible outside ourselves in the heavenly bodies, in animals and plants, and in the whole universe. In the external world we see this subordination to the law of reason, but in ourselves we recognize this law as that which we ought ourselves to fulfil.

The ordinary delusion about life is that we mistake for the law of human life the law to which our animal body yields a visible submission, whereas that law of our animal body, with which our

reasonable consciousness is connected, acts in our animal body as involuntarily as it does in the tree, the crystal, or in the heavenly bodies. But the law of our life—the submission of our animal body to reason—is a law we do not see anywhere, and cannot see because it has not yet been accomplished but is being accomplished in our life. Our life consists in the accomplishment of this law, in subjecting our animal personality to the law of reason for the attainment of good. But not understanding that our welfare and our life consist in the submission of our animal personality to the law of reason, and by regarding the welfare and existence of this animal personality as our whole life and rejecting the task which has been set us, we deprive ourselves of our true welfare and of our true life, and substitute for it the visible existence of our animal activity, which goes on independently of us and therefore cannot be our life.

## XI

### *The false direction of knowledge.*

THE delusion that the visible law operating on our animal personality is the law of our life, is an ancient error men have always fallen into as they still do. That delusion—concealing from men the chief object of their knowledge, namely, subordination of the animal personality to reason in order to obtain the good of life—substitutes the study of human existence independently of the good of life.

Instead of studying the law to which man's animal personality should be subordinated for the attainment of his good, and on the basis of that knowledge studying everything else after becoming acquainted with that law, false knowledge directs its efforts solely to the study of the existence of man's animal personality and its welfare, without

reference to the chief object of knowledge—which is the subordination of man's animal personality to the law of reason in order to attain the good of the true life.

False science, not having this chief purpose of knowledge in view, directs its energy to the study of the animal existence of past and present mankind, and in general to the study of the conditions of man's existence as an animal. It imagines that by such studies guidance can be found for the good of human life.

False science judges thus: Men exist and have previously existed, so let us see how they lived, what changes have occurred in their existence in time and space, and in what direction these changes have tended. From those historical changes we shall discover the law of their life.

Not having in view the principal aim of knowledge—the study of the reasonable law to which man's personality should be subordinated for his welfare—so-called science of that kind, by the very aim it proposes for its investigation, passes sentence on the futility of its study. In fact, if the existence of man changes only in accordance with the general law of his animal existence, the study of these laws to which he is subject is in any case quite useless and superfluous. Whether men do or do not know the law of the changes in their existence, that law operates just the same, just as the changes in the life of moles and beavers occur in consequence of the conditions of their life. But if it is possible for man to arrive at a knowledge of the reasonable law which should govern his life, he can evidently find this knowledge nowhere but there where he has discovered it, that is, in his rational consciousness. And so however much people may study the existence of man as an animal, they will never learn



anything about the existence of man that would not have occurred without that knowledge; and however much they may study man's animal existence they will never learn the law to which man's animal existence should be subordinated for his real welfare.

This is one category of the useless theories of life that are called historical and political science.

Another category of these theories particularly common in our time and in which the one object of knowledge is entirely lost sight of, is this: Viewing man as an object of observation, say the scientists, we see that he feeds, grows, breeds, grows old, and dies, like any other animal, but some psychic phenomena (as they call them) hinder the exactitude of our observations and present too great a complexity, and so to get to know man better we will first examine his life in its simpler manifestations such as we see in animals and plants which are devoid of this psychic activity. For this purpose we will examine the life of animals and plants in general. And examining them we see that yet simpler laws of matter appear common to them all. And since the laws of animals are simpler than those of human life and those of plants are simpler still and those of matter again simpler, we must base our investigations on what is simplest of all, namely on the laws of matter. We see that what takes place in plants and animals occurs in just the same way in man, and so we conclude that all that takes place in man can be explained by what occurs in the simplest inanimate matter which we can see and subject to our experiments, especially as all the peculiarities of man's activity are in constant dependence on the forces active in matter—every change in the matter of which man's body is composed alters and disturbs his activity. And so they conclude that the laws of matter are the causes of

man's activity. They are not disconcerted by the reflection that there is in man something we do not see in animals or in plants or in inanimate matter, and that knowledge of this something is the only thing worth seeking, and that without it all other knowledge is futile.

It does not occur to them that if changes of matter in man's body disturb his activity, that merely proves that this alteration of matter is one of the causes disturbing his activity and does not prove that the movement of matter is the cause of his activity.

Thus the harm done to a plant by taking soil from under its roots proves that the soil can, or cannot, be removed at will, but not that the plant is solely the product of soil. But in man they study what goes on in dead matter, in plants, and in animals, assuming that the elucidation of the laws of the phenomena of man's life will render that life itself plain to them.

To understand man's life—that is, the law to which his animal personality ought to be subordinated for his good—men examine either his historical existence (but not his life), or the subjection (seen but not felt by man) of animals, plants, and inanimate matter to various laws: that is, they do as people would do who studied the position of unknown objects in order to find the way to an unknown destination they wish to reach.

It is quite true that knowledge of the visible manifestations of man's existence in history may be instructive, and that similarly a knowledge of the laws of man's animal personality, and of other animals, may be instructive, as also the laws to which matter itself is subject. The study of all these things is important, showing man, as in a reflection, what necessarily occurs in his life, but it is

evident that a knowledge of what occurs and is seen by us, however complete it may be, cannot give us the principal knowledge we need—knowledge of the law to which our animal personality should be subject for our good. A knowledge of the operation of physical laws is instructive for us, but only when we admit that law of reason to which our animal personality should be in subordination and not when we quite disregard that law.

However well a tree might study (if it could study) all the chemical and physical phenomena that occur in it, it could not possibly deduce from those observations and indications the necessity of collecting sap and distributing it for the growth of its trunk, leaves, flowers, and fruit.

In the same way man, no matter how well he may know the law governing his animal personality and the laws governing matter, will never gather from those laws the least indication of what he ought to do with the bit of bread he has in his hand: whether he ought to give it to his wife, to a stranger, to a dog, or eat it himself; whether he ought to store this bit of bread, or give it to him who asks for it. Yet the life of man consists only in the decision of these and similar matters.

The study of laws governing the existence of animals plants and matter, is not only useful, it is even indispensable for the elucidation of the law of man's life, but only when this study has for its aim the principal object of human knowledge—explanation of the law of reason.

But on the supposition that man's life is only his animal existence, that the good indicated by his rational consciousness is impossible, and that the law of reason is only a phantom, such study becomes not merely idle but fatal, hiding from man the sole object of knowledge and confirming him in the error

of believing that by studying the reflection of an object he can get to know the object itself. Such study is like attentively studying all the changes and movements of the shadow of a living being, in the belief that the changes and movements of the shadow occasion the movements of the living being.

## XII

*The false perspective in which objects are seen is the cause of false knowledge.*

'TRUE knowledge', said Confucius, 'consists in knowing that we know what we do know, and that we do not know what we do not know. False knowledge consists in thinking that we know what we do not know, and that we do not know what we do know.' It is impossible to give a more exact definition of the false knowledge that prevails among us. The false science of our day assumes that we know what we cannot know, and that we cannot know the one thing we really do know. A man with this false knowledge assumes that he knows all that presents itself to him in space and time, and that he does not know what his reasonable consciousness tells him.

Such a man imagines that good in general, and his own good in particular, are the most unknowable of all things for him; his reasonable consciousness seems to him almost equally unknowable, he himself as an animal seems rather more knowable, animals and plants seem more knowable still, and inanimate and infinitely diffused matter seems to him the most knowable of all.

Something similar happens with regard to man's sight. A man always unconsciously directs his look first to objects that are farthest away and which therefore seem simplest in colour and outline: the

sky, the horizon, the distant fields and woods. The farther these things are away the more definitely and simply do they present themselves, while the nearer an object is the more complex are its outlines and colour.

If a man could not distinguish the distance of objects, and disregarded the perspective, considering a greater simplicity of form and colour to indicate a greater degree of visibility, the infinite sky would appear to him to be the simplest and most visible object; the more complex outlines of the horizon would appear rather less visible; the houses and trees would seem less visible still because of their greater complexity in colour and outline; his own hand moving before his eyes would seem still less visible; while light would appear to him to be least visible of all.

Is it not the same with man's false knowledge? What is indubitably known to him, his reasonable consciousness, appears to him unknowable because it is not simple, while what is certainly incomprehensible to him—illimitable and eternal matter—seems to him to be the most knowable of all things because its very remoteness from him makes it appear simple.

In reality it is just the reverse. First of all, and most certainly of all, every man can and does know the good to which he aspires, he also knows with equal certainty that reason which indicates this good to him. After that he knows his animal self subjected to this reason, and only then does he see (but does not know) all the other phenomena that present themselves to him in space and time.

Only a false conception of life gives a man the impression that the more objects are defined by space and time the better he knows them: in reality we know fully only what is not defined either by

space or time—good, and the law of reason. And the less our consciousness participates in our perception of external objects the less we know them. The object is defined only by its position in space and time, and the more exclusively an object is defined by space and time the less it is knowable (intelligible) to man.

Man's true knowledge ends with his cognition of his personality as an animal. This animal self, striving for welfare and subjected to the law of reason, man knows quite differently from his knowledge of all that is not himself. He actually knows himself in this animal, and knows himself not because he is a thing in time and space (on the contrary he can never know himself as a phenomenon of time and space), but because he is something that must for its good be subject to the law of reason. He is conscious of himself in this animal as something independent of time and space. When he asks himself about his place in time and space it seems to him at first that he stands in the midst of infinite time extending in both directions, and that he is the centre of a sphere whose surface is everywhere and nowhere. And it is just this self outside of time and space that a man really knows, and his real knowledge ends with this ego. Man does not know anything apart from his ego, he can only observe and define external things in an external, conditional way.

Renouncing for a time his knowledge of himself as a rational centre striving towards what is good—that is to say, as a being independent of time and space—he may for a while conditionally admit that he is a part of the visible universe, manifested in space and time. Viewing himself thus in space and time in relation with other beings man unites his true and inward knowledge of himself with an

external observation of himself and thus receives an idea of himself as of a man in general, resembling other men. From this conditional knowledge of himself he gets some external idea of other men also, but he does not know them.

This impossibility of man getting a real knowledge of men arises also from his seeing not one, but hundreds and thousands of them. He knows that there are, have been, and will be, men whom he has never seen and never will see.

And besides men, and still farther away from himself in space and time, man sees animals which differ from men and from each other. These beings would be quite incomprehensible to him if he had no knowledge of men in general; but having that knowledge, and abstracting reasonable consciousness from his conception of man, he gets some conception of the animals. This perception of his, however, is still less like knowledge than his idea of men in general. He sees an enormous number and variety of animals of all sorts, and evidently the more there are the less is it possible for him to know them.

Still farther away from himself he sees plants, and the diffusion of these phenomena in the world is yet greater, so that knowledge of them is even more impossible.

Farther away again from himself in space and time man sees inanimate bodies and the still less differentiated or quite undifferentiated forms of matter. Matter he understands least of all. A knowledge of the forms of matter is quite indifferent to him, and he not merely does not possess that knowledge, he simply imagines it, the more so as matter presents itself to him as infinite in time and space.

## XIII

*Our possibility of knowing objects does not increase in consequence of their manifestation in space and time but in consequence of the fact that we and the things we study are subject to one and the same law.*

WHAT can be more understandable than the words, 'the dog is hurt, the calf is affectionate—it is fond of me, the bird is glad, the horse is frightened, a kind man, a savage animal'? Yet none of these very important and intelligible words is defined by space and time; on the contrary, the more exactly a phenomenon is defined in time and space the less we understand it. Who can say that he understands the law of gravity by which the movements of the earth, the moon, and the sun, are governed? Yet the eclipse of the sun is very exactly defined in space and time.

We know nothing fully except our own life, our aspiration towards good, and the reason which indicates this good to us. Next in certainty is knowledge of our animal personality striving towards its good and subject to the law of reason. In the knowledge of our animal personality conditions of time and space do appear, visible, tangible, and observable, but inaccessible to our understanding. Next in order of certainty comes the knowledge of animal personalities similar to our own, in which we recognize an aspiration towards good in common with our own and a reasonable consciousness such as our own. We know them to the extent to which the life of these individuals accords with the laws of our own life, with an inspiration towards good and submission to the law of reason; we do not know them by the extent to which their life manifests itself in conditions of time and space. So we



know men best of all. Next in order of certitude is our knowledge of animals, in which we see personalities aspiring like our own to well-being; but here already a semblance of reasonable consciousness such as our own is barely recognizable, and with some of them we can no longer communicate by means of that rational consciousness. After the animals we come to plants, in which we can hardly recognize any similarity to our own individuality and striving towards good: they appear to us chiefly in their relation to time and space and so are still less accessible to our understanding.

Even less accessible to our understanding are impersonal material objects; in them we find no similarity to our own personality and see no striving whatever towards good: we merely see manifestations in time and space of the law of reason by which they are governed.

The sureness of our knowledge does not depend on the possibility of observing objects in space and time, but on the contrary, the more observable the manifestation of the object in space and time the less comprehensible is it to us.

Our knowledge of the world results from the consciousness we have of our own aspiration towards good and of the necessity of subjecting our animal self to reason for the attainment of that good.

If we understand the life of an animal, that is only because even in the animal we see a striving after the good and the necessity of submitting to the law of reason which is the law of its organism.

If we know matter, we know it only because, though its good is not comprehensible to us, we see in it the same thing as in ourselves—a necessity of submitting to the law of reason which governs it.

The knowledge of anything whatever is for us the bringing to bear on it our consciousness that life is

a striving after good which is only attainable by submission to the law of reason.

We cannot get to know ourselves from the laws that govern animals, though we know animals only from the law we know in ourselves. Still less can we learn to know ourselves from the laws of our life applied to material phenomena.

All that a man knows of the external world he knows only because he knows himself and finds in himself three different relations to the world: the relation of his reasonable consciousness, the relation of his animal personality, and the relation of matter contained in his animal body. He perceives in himself these three relations, and so all that he sees in the world always groups itself before him in a perspective composed of three distinct planes: (1) Reasoning beings, (2) Animal and vegetable matter, and (3) Inanimate matter.

Man always sees these three orders of things in the world because each of them is contained in himself. He knows himself firstly as a reasonable consciousness, subordinating his animal self; secondly as an animal subject to reasonable consciousness; and thirdly as matter in subjection to his animal self.

It is not from knowledge of the laws of matter, as is generally believed, that we can learn the laws of organisms, and not by knowledge of the laws of organisms that we can learn to know ourselves as rational beings, but vice versa. First of all, we can and must know ourselves, that is to say, know the law of reason to which for our good our personality must be subordinated; only then can we gain a knowledge of the law of our animal personality and of other personalities like it, and at a still greater distance from us, the laws of matter.

We must know, and we do know, only ourselves.

The animal kingdom is for us only a reflection of what we know in ourselves. The material world is, as it were, the reflection of a reflection.

The laws of matter seem specially clear to us only because in our eyes they are uniform, and they seem to us uniform only because they are very far removed from the law of our life of which we are conscious.

The laws of organisms seem to us simpler than the law of our own life, again in consequence of their remoteness from us. But in them again we only observe the laws, we do not know them as we know the law of rational consciousness which we have to fulfil.

We do not know either the one or the other of these existences, we only see and observe them outside ourselves. It is only the law of our reasonable consciousness that we indubitably know without any doubt, because it is essential for our good and because we live by that consciousness. We do not see it because we cannot place ourselves at any higher point from which we could observe it.

Only if there existed higher beings, dominating reasonable consciousness as it dominates our animal personality and as the animal personality (the organism) dominates matter, could our reasonable life be surveyed as we survey our animal existence and the existence of matter.

Man's life appears to us indissolubly connected with two aspects of existence which are contained in it: the existence of animals and plants (organic life) and the existence of matter.

Man makes his own true life and lives it himself; but in these two aspects of existence united to his life he cannot take part—the body and the matter constituting him exist of themselves.

These aspects of existence present themselves to man as though they were lives previously lived and embraced in his own life as recollections.

In man's true life these two aspects of existence furnish the instrument and material for his work, but are not that work itself.

It is useful for man to study both the material and the instrument of his work. The better he knows them, the better condition will he be in to work. The study of these aspects of existence contained in his life (that of his animal self and of the matter of which it is formed) shows man, as in a mirror, the general law of all that exists—that of submission to the law of reason—and so confirms him in the necessity of submitting his animal self to that law; but a man must not and should not mistake the material and instrument of his work for the work itself.

However much man may study the life, visible and tangible, which he observes in himself and in others—a life which goes on without effort on his part—this life always remains a mystery to him. Such observations will never enable him to understand this unknowable life of which he is not conscious, and his observations on that mysterious life, which is always concealed from him in the infinitude of space and time, can never throw light upon his true life revealed to him in his rational consciousness and consisting in the subordination of his animal personality—quite distinct from all else and known to him of itself—to a quite special law of reason also known to him, for the attainment of a quite special good which he knows.

#### XIV

*The true life of man is not what takes place in space and time.*

MAN knows life in himself as a striving towards a good, attainable by subjecting his animal personality to the law of reason.

Man does not and cannot know any other human life. He only regards an animal as living when the matter of which it is composed is subject not merely to its own laws but also to the higher laws of the organism.

If in a certain combination of matter there is submission to the higher law of the organism, we recognize life as being present; but if this submission does not exist, if it has not begun or has ended; when that is lacking which distinguishes it from matter in which only mechanical, chemical, and physical laws operate—we do not recognize it as possessing animal life.

In just the same way we only recognize life as being present in our fellows or in ourselves when our animal personality is subject not only to the laws of the organism but also to the higher law of reasonable consciousness.

As soon as that submission of personality to the law of reason is absent, as soon as we act only according to the law that subjects to itself the matter of which we are composed, we do not perceive or recognize human life either in ourselves or in others, any more than we see animal life in matter which is subject only to the laws of matter.

However strong or rapid a man's movements may be in his death struggle, in madness, in delirium, in drunkenness, or even in a paroxysm of passion, we do not recognize life in him, we do not treat him as a living man, we only admit the possibility of life in him. But however weak and motionless a man may be, if we see that his animal personality is in subjection to reason we recognize life in him and treat him accordingly.

We cannot understand human life otherwise than as the submission of an animal personality to the law of reason.

This life, though manifested in time and space, is not determined by conditions of time and space, but only by the degree of the subjection of the animal personality to reason. To define life by conditions of time and space is like defining the height of an object by its length and breadth.

The upward movement of an object which also moves horizontally supplies an exact comparison to the relationship between man's true life and that of his animal personality, or between true life and life in space and time. The upward movement of the object does not depend on its horizontal movement and cannot be either increased or decreased by it. So also with the determination of human life. True life is always manifested in the personality, but does not depend on it and cannot be increased or diminished by this or that personal existence.

The conditions in time and space of a man's animal personality cannot influence his true life, which consists in the subjection of the animal personality to reasonable consciousness.

It is beyond the power of a man to destroy or arrest the movement of his existence in space and time if he wishes to live, but his true life is the attainment of what is good by means of submission to reason independently of those movements in time and space. It is in this greater and greater attainment of what is good by means of submission to reason, and in this alone, that human life consists. Without this increase in submission, man's life only moves in two visible directions of space and time, and is mere existence. When there is this ascending movement, this progressive submission to reason, a relation is established between the two forces and the one, and a greater or lesser movement along the resultant of these forces takes place which lifts the existence of man into the region of life.

The forces of space and time—forces that are definite and finite—are incompatible with the idea of life, but the force striving towards the good through submission to reason is, as it were, an ascending force, it is the essential force of life which has no limitations of time and space.

It seems to man that his life is arrested and is divided, but these stoppages and perturbations are only an illusion of his consciousness (like the illusions of external sensations). True life can experience neither arrest nor perturbation, they only seem to us to be there owing to our false idea of life.

A man begins to live true life, that is, he rises to a certain height above the animal life and from this height sees the unreality of his animal existence which is inevitably terminated by death. He sees that his existence on the horizontal plane is bounded on all sides by precipices, and, as he does not recognize that the upward movement is life itself, he is horrified at what he sees from above. Instead of recognizing the force that raises him to be his life and travelling in the direction that presents itself to him, he is horrified at what he sees from above and purposely descends and crouches as low as possible so as not to see the precipices that surround him. But the force of rational consciousness raises him again, and again he sees and again he is terrified, and again descends to the earth in order to avoid seeing. And this continues until at last he recognizes that to save himself from fear at the movement of perishable life that is bearing him along, he must understand that this movement on the horizontal plane—that is, his life in time and space—is not his life, but that his life consists only of the upward movement, and that only in the submission of his personality to the law of reason is there a possibility

of welfare and of life. He must understand that he has wings which raise him above the abyss, and that if he did not possess them he would never have risen to the height and would not have seen the abyss. He has to trust himself to his wings and fly where they carry him.

Only this insufficient confidence produces that appearance of instability in the true life, with its stoppages and divisions of consciousness which at first seemed terrible.

Only to a man who understands his life as being his animal existence limited by space and time, does it appear that reasonable consciousness is merely a phenomenon appearing from time to time during his animal existence. And looking thus at the manifestation of reasonable consciousness in himself, man asks himself when, and under what circumstances, this reasonable consciousness showed itself in him. But however much he may investigate his past he will never find those periods of the manifestation of rational consciousness; it always seems to him either that such manifestations never occurred or that rational consciousness has been there all the time. If it seems to him that there have been intervals between the manifestations of reasonable consciousness, this is solely because he does not acknowledge the life of reasonable consciousness to be his real life. Understanding his life only as an animal existence determined by conditions of time and space, man wishes also to measure the awakening and activity of his reasonable consciousness by the same measure. He asks himself when, for how long, and under what conditions, he was possessed by this reasonable consciousness. But intervals between awakenings of reasonable life only exist for a man who understands his life as being the life of his animal personality. For one who understands his



life as being what it really is—the activity of reasonable consciousness—those intervals cannot exist.

Reasonable life exists. It is the only thing that does exist. Intervals of time, of one minute or of fifty thousand years, are alike for it, because for it time does not exist. The true life of man, that from which he forms for himself a conception of any other life, is an aspiration towards good, obtainable by the submission of his personality to the law of reason. But neither reason, nor the degree of submission to it, are determined by space or by time. True human life is fulfilled outside of space and time.

## XV

*The law of human life is renunciation of the good of the animal life.*

LIFE is a striving towards good. A striving towards good is life. That is how all men have understood, do understand, and always will understand life. Thus man's life is a striving towards human good, and a striving towards human good is man's life. The unthinking multitude understand man's good to be the good of his animal personality.

False science, excluding the idea of good from the definition of life, considers it to be merely animal existence, and therefore sees the good of life only in animal welfare and coincides with the error of the crowd.

In both cases the mistake arises from confusing personality—individuality, as science terms it—with the reasonable consciousness. Reasonable consciousness includes in itself personality, but personality does not include in itself reasonable consciousness. Personality is an attribute common

to animals, and to man in so far as he is an animal. Reasonable consciousness is an attribute of man alone.

An animal can live for its body alone, nothing prevents its doing so. It gratifies its personality and unconsciously serves its kind without knowing what personality is; but a reasonable man cannot live for his body alone. He cannot do so because he knows that he is a personality, and therefore knows that other beings also are personalities such as he, and knows what ought to happen from the relations between those personalities.

If man aspired only to the good of his personality, if he loved only himself, his personality, he would not know (as animals do not know) that other beings also love themselves. But when he knows himself to be a personality striving for what all the people around him are striving for, he can no longer strive for a welfare which his reasonable consciousness sees to be an evil, and his life can no longer consist in striving for personal welfare.

It seems to man at times that his striving towards good has for its object the gratification of the demands of his animal personality. This is due to his mistaking the activities he sees in his animal self for the goal aimed at by his reasonable consciousness. The error is like that of a man who lets himself be guided in his waking state by what he has seen in a dream.

And then, if that error is supported by false teachings, a confusion occurs in the man's mind between his personality and his reasonable consciousness.

But his reasonable consciousness always shows him that the gratification of the demands of his animal personality cannot be his good, and consequently cannot be his life; he is drawn irresistibly towards the good and the life which are natural

to him and are not contained in his animal personality.

It is commonly thought and said that the renunciation of personal welfare is an heroic and meritorious deed. In reality the renunciation of that personal welfare is neither a merit nor an heroic achievement, but is an inevitable condition of the life of man. When man recognizes himself as a personality distinct from the whole world, he also sees other personalities distinct from the whole world, and their mutual connexion; he sees the illusion of personal welfare, and recognizes that the only good lies in fulfilling the demands of reasonable consciousness.

For an animal any activity which has not its personal welfare for its aim but is directly opposed to that welfare, is a negation of life; but for man it is just the reverse. It is a complete negation of human life for a man to direct his activity only to the attainment of his personal welfare.

For an animal which has not reasonable consciousness to show it the wretchedness and finiteness of its existence, the welfare of its personality (and the resulting continuation of the species) is the highest aim of life. But for man personality is not life, it is merely the stage of his existence at which he discovers the true good of life—which does not coincide with the good of his personality.

The consciousness of personality is not life for a man but the point at which his life begins—the real life which consists in a greater and ever greater attainment of the good natural to him independently of the good of his animal personality.

According to the current conception of life a man's life is the period of time between the birth and death of his animal personality. But this is not man's human life, it is only his existence as an

animal personality. Man's life merely utilizes the animal existence for its manifestation, just as organic life utilizes matter to manifest itself.

At first the visible aims of his personality appear to man to be the aims of his life. These aims being visible seem to him intelligible.

But the aims indicated to him by his reasonable consciousness seem incomprehensible because they are invisible. And it is at first terrifying to a man to renounce the visible and devote himself to what is invisible.

To a man perverted by the world's false doctrines the demands of the animal (which fulfil themselves and are seen in himself and in others) appear simple and clear, whereas the new and invisible demands of reasonable consciousness appear contradictory: the satisfaction of those demands, which does not fulfil itself but which he himself has to fulfil, appears to him complicated and obscure. It is terrible and strange to renounce a visible conception of life and yield to an invisible consciousness of it (as it would be terrible and strange for a child to be born, if it were able to feel its birth), but it cannot be avoided since it is evident that the visible conception of life leads to death, and the invisible consciousness alone yields life.

## XVI

*The animal personality is an instrument of life.*

No argument can hide from man the evident and indisputable truth that his personal existence is something that is continually perishing and hastening on to death, and that consequently his animal personality cannot be life.

Man cannot avoid seeing that his personal existence from birth and childhood to old age and death is nothing but a constant expenditure and

diminution of his animal personality, which inevitably ends in death; and so to regard as his life this personality, which contains within itself a desire for its own increase and indestructibility, must be a constant contradiction and suffering, and must be an evil; for the sole meaning of man's life is its aspiration towards good.

Whatever man's true good may be, his renunciation of the welfare of his animal personality is inevitable.

Renunciation of the welfare of animal personality is a law of human life. If it is not accomplished freely, expressing itself in submission to reasonable consciousness, it is accomplished forcibly in each man at the bodily death of his animal personality, when under the weight of his sufferings he desires only one thing: to be freed from the painful consciousness of his perishing personality and pass over to another plane of existence.

Man's entry into life and his life itself are like what takes place when its master fetches a horse out of the stable and harnesses it to a cart. On coming out of the stable the horse, seeing the light of day and scenting liberty, imagines this liberty is life; but it is harnessed to the cart and the reins are pulled. It feels a load behind it, and if it thinks that its life consists in running about free it begins to struggle, and falls and sometimes kills itself. If it does not kill itself two courses are open to it: either it draws its load and finds that it is not too heavy and that drawing it is not a misery but a pleasure, or else it becomes unmanageable and then the master takes it to a treadmill and ties it to the wall; the wheel turns under its feet and it goes round on one spot in the dark and suffers, but its strength is not expended in vain, it performs its involuntary task and the law is fulfilled—the difference is only

that in the first case it works cheerfully, but in the second unwillingly and painfully.

'But why is this personality given me, the well-being of which I, a man, must renounce in order to attain life?' say men who take animal existence for life. Why is this consciousness of personality, which hinders the manifestation of his true life, given to man?

This question may be answered by a similar one which might be put by an animal striving towards its aims of preserving its life and race. 'Why,' it might ask, 'is there this matter with its laws—mechanical, physical, chemical and other—with which I must struggle to attain my ends? If my vocation is to live the life of an animal, why are there all these obstacles for me to overcome?'

To us it is clear that all matter and its laws with which the animal strives and which it subjects to itself for the existence of its animal personality, are not obstacles but means for the attainment of its aims. Only by digesting matter, and by means of its laws, does the animal live. And it is the same with man. The animal personality in which man finds himself and which he is called upon to subdue to his reasonable consciousness, is not an obstacle but a means by which to attain the aim of his well-being: his animal personality is the tool with which he works. His animal personality is for man the spade supplied to a rational being to dig with, and in digging to blunt and sharpen and use up, but not to polish and store away. It is a talent given him for increase but not for hoarding.

'Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.' In those words it is said that it is impossible to preserve what has to perish and is unceasingly perishing, and that only by renouncing what is

perishing and must perish—that is to say, our animal personality—can we obtain our true life which does not and cannot perish. It says that our true life begins only when we cease to regard as life that which for us has not been and cannot be life—namely, our animal existence. It says that he who spares the spade given him to procure food for the sustenance of life, by saving the spade will deprive himself both of food and of life.

## XVII

### *Birth by the spirit.*

‘YE must be born again,’ said Jesus. This does not mean that someone commands man to be born again, but that he is inevitably brought to it. To have life he must be reborn to the life of reasonable consciousness.

Reasonable consciousness is given to man in order that his life should consist of the good which this consciousness discloses to him. He who finds his life in this good has true life; he who does not find his life there but in the good of his animal personality, thereby deprives himself of life. This is the definition of life given by Christ.

Men who consider their life to consist in efforts for the welfare of their personality hear these words and, I do not say reject them, but do not and cannot understand them. These words seem to them either quite meaningless, or to mean very little—indicating some sentimental and mystical mood (as they like to call it). They cannot understand the meaning of those words—indicating as they do a state of mind inaccessible to them, any more than a hard dry grain would be able to understand the condition of a moist and germinating seed. To the dry grain the sun whose rays shine

on the germinating seeds is but an unimportant incident, just a little increase of warmth and light, but the germinating seed knows it as the cause of its rebirth to life. It is the same with men who have not yet reached the inner contradiction of animal personality and reasonable consciousness: to them the light of the sun of reason is only an unimportant accident—sentiment and mystical words. The sun brings to life only those in whom life has already germinated.

How it germinates in man and also in animal and plant, and why, and when, and where, no one has ever been able to find out. Of its birth in man Jesus said that no man knows it or can know it.

Indeed what can a man know of how life germinates in him? Life is the light of men, life is life, the origin of all things. How then can a man know how it germinates? For him what germinates and perishes is that which does not really live but appears in space and time. But the true life *is*, and so for man it can neither germinate nor perish.

## XVIII

### *What reasonable consciousness demands.*

Yes, reasonable consciousness undoubtedly and undeniably tells man that the arrangement of the world, seen from the point of view of his own personality, renders his personal welfare impossible. His life is a desire for well-being for himself, for his own personal self, and he sees that this welfare is impossible. But strange to say, though he sees without doubt that this personal welfare is impossible, he still lives with the one desire for the impossible—this welfare for himself alone.

A man whose reasonable consciousness has only just awakened and who has not yet subjected his



animal personality to it, if he does not kill himself, lives only to realize this impossible personal welfare. He lives and acts only to obtain welfare for himself alone—that all men (and all living creatures even) should live and act solely for his happiness, that he should have enjoyment, and that he should escape suffering and death.

Strange to say, though his own experience and observation of the life of all who surround him, as well as his reason, indubitably show the impossibility of this, and that it is impossible to make other living beings cease loving themselves and love him alone; despite this the life of each man consists only in the effort to oblige others—by riches, power, honours, fame, flattery, deception, in one way or another—to live not for themselves but only for him, and to compel them all to love him alone instead of themselves.

Men have done and still do their utmost for that end, and at the same time see that they are trying to do what is impossible. 'My life is a striving for happiness,' says man to himself. 'Happiness is possible for me only if everyone loves me more than himself, but everyone loves only himself, and so all that I do to make others love me is useless. It is useless, but I can do nothing else.'

Ages pass. Men have calculated the distance to the stars, determined their weight, discovered what the sun and the stars are composed of; but the question of how to reconcile the demands of personal happiness with the life of the world which renders this happiness impossible, remains for most men as unsolved as it was five thousand years ago.

Reasonable consciousness tells each man: Yes, you can have welfare, but only on condition that all men love you more than themselves. And this same reasonable consciousness shows man that this

cannot be, because all men love themselves alone. And so the sole good that reasonable consciousness discloses to man is hidden afresh by this very consciousness.

Ages pass, and the problem of the good of man's life remains for most people as inexplicable as ever. Yet the problem was solved long long ago. And all who learn the answer wonder how it was that they did not solve it themselves: they seem to have known it long ago and to have merely forgotten it, so simple and so ready to hand is the solution of the problem that appeared so difficult amid the false teachings of our world.

'You wish everyone to live for you, and that they all should love you more than they do themselves? There is only one condition under which your wish could be satisfied: that all beings should live for the good of others and love others more than themselves. Only then will you and all beings be loved by all, and you among them will obtain just the good that you desire. If welfare is possible for you only when all beings love others more than themselves, then you, a living being, must love others more than yourself.'

Only on this condition are welfare and happiness and life possible for man, and only on this condition can all that poisons man's life be destroyed: the struggle for existence, the torment of suffering, and the terror of death.

What indeed makes the happiness of personal existence impossible? In the first place, the strife among themselves of those who seek personal good; secondly, the deception of pleasure, which produces waste of life, satiety, and suffering; and in the third place, death. But we need only admit in thought that man can exchange the striving for the good of his personality for a striving for the good of others,

and happiness is seen to be within man's reach, and the impossibility of attaining it vanishes. Conceiving life to be a struggle for personal welfare and looking at the world from that angle, man sees an insensate struggle of individuals destroying one another. But he need only recognize his life to be a striving for the good of others, to see something quite different: to see—side by side with the manifestations of strife among beings—a constant and mutual service rendered to one another by those beings; a service without which the existence of the world is inconceivable.

We need only admit that, and all the previous senseless activity directed towards the unattainable good of the personality gives place to another activity in harmony with the universal law and directed towards the attainment of the greatest possible good for oneself and for the whole world.

Another cause of the poverty of the personal life and of the impossibility of man's good, is the deceptive nature of personal pleasures, which waste life and lead to satiety and suffering. Man need only recognize his life as consisting in a striving for the good of others and the illusory thirst for pleasure disappears, and the vain, tormenting activity directed to filling the bottomless cask of animal personality gives place to an activity in harmony with the laws of reason and directed to sustaining the life of other beings—an activity necessary for his own good: the torment of personal suffering which destroys the activity of his life is replaced by a feeling of compassion for others, which unquestionably evokes a fruitful and very joyous activity.

The third cause of the poorness of personal life is the fear of death. But man need only recognize his life as consisting not in the good of his animal personality but in the good of other beings, and the

burden of death will disappear for ever from his view.

Indeed the fear of death is due only to the fear of losing the good of life at bodily death. If man could place his good in that of other beings—that is, if he loved them more than himself—death would not seem to him (as it seems to a man who lives only for himself) the cessation of the good and of life. To a man who lives for others death cannot present itself as the annihilation of welfare and of life, for the welfare and the life of others, far from being destroyed by the death of a man who serves them, are often increased and strengthened by the sacrifice of his life.

## XIX

### *Confirmation of the demands of rational consciousness.*

‘BUT this is not life!’ says outraged and erring human consciousness. ‘It is a renunciation of life—it is suicide.’ I know nothing about that, replies reasonable consciousness. I know that such is man’s life, and that there is and can be no other. More than that, I know that this is life and welfare both for the individual man and for the whole world. I know that with the former conception of the world my life and that of everything that exists seemed evil and meaningless, but with this conception it is revealed as an accomplishment of the law of reason which is implanted in man. I know that the greatest good—and one capable of being infinitely increased—for every being, can be attained only by this law of devotion of each to all and accordingly of all to each.

‘But even if that law can be admitted in theory it is not so in practice,’ replies man’s outraged and erring animal personality. ‘Others do not now love

me more than themselves, and so I cannot love them more than myself and for their sake deprive myself of pleasures and subject myself to sufferings. I have nothing to do with the law of reason. I want pleasure for myself and wish to be free from suffering. There is now a struggle between all beings, and if I alone do not take part in that struggle I shall be crushed by the others. It is all the same to me how the greatest good for all can be attained in theory. I want my own greatest good now,' says the animal personality.

I know nothing about that, replies reasonable consciousness. I only know that your so-called enjoyments can only be good for you when you do not take them for yourself but when others give them to you; and that so long as you snatch them for yourself your enjoyments will continue to be the superfluities and sufferings they now become. You will only be free from real sufferings when others free you, and not when you do it yourself—as now, when from fear of imaginary sufferings you deprive yourself of life itself.

I know that personal life—the life in which it is necessary that all should love me alone and I love only myself, and in which I want to get as much enjoyment as possible and free myself from suffering and death—is the greatest and most unceasing suffering.

The more I love myself and struggle with others the more they will hate me and the more ferociously will they struggle against me; the more I strive to safeguard myself against sufferings the more painful will they be; the more I try to guard myself against death the more terrible it will be.

I know that whatever a man may do he will not obtain what is good unless he lives in accord with the law of his life. And the law of his life is not

strife, but on the contrary a mutual exchange of service among all beings.

‘But I know life only in my own personality. It is impossible for me to place my life in the good of other beings.’

I know nothing about that, says reasonable consciousness. I only know that my life and that of the world, which formerly seemed to me an evil absurdity, now appears to me an intelligible whole, living and striving for one and the same good by submission to one and the same law of reason which I know in myself.

‘But that is impossible for me!’ says the erring personality. Yet there is no one who has not accomplished this impossible thing and found in it the best good of his life.

‘It is impossible to recognize one’s good in that of other beings’—and yet there is no man who does not know circumstances in which the good of others outside himself has become his own good. ‘It is impossible to consider that personal good lies in working and suffering for others’—yet a man need but yield to this feeling of compassion, and personal pleasures lose their meaning for him and the energy of his life is transferred to toil and suffering for the good of others, and this suffering and labour become a good for him. ‘It is impossible to sacrifice life for the good of others’—yet a man need but experience this feeling, and death not only ceases to be visible or terrible to him but even appears to be the highest attainable good.

A reasonable man cannot help seeing that if he admits in theory the possibility of exchanging his striving after his personal good for a striving after the good of other beings, his life instead of being senseless and wretched as it was formerly, becomes rational and good. He cannot but see also that by

crediting other people and beings with the same understanding, the life of the whole world becomes the highest rational good that man can desire, instead of being senseless and cruel as he formerly saw it. Instead of the former senselessness and aimlessness, it now has for him a reasonable meaning. The purpose of the world appears to such a man to be an infinite enlightenment and unity of all beings. He sees that life proceeds towards this end, in which at first men, and then all beings, submitting more and more to the law of reason, will understand (what it is now given only to man to understand) that the good of life is attained not by the striving of each being for its personal good, but by the striving of every being for the good of all the rest in conformity with the law of reason.

But more than this: if man only admits the possibility of replacing the effort for his own good by an effort for the good of others, he cannot fail to see also that just this same gradual greater and greater renunciation of his own personality, and transference of the aim of its activity from self to others, is also the whole forward movement of humanity and of the living beings nearest to man. He cannot but see in history that the movement of life in general does not lie in intensifying and increasing the strife of beings among themselves, but on the contrary in a diminution of the discord and a weakening of the strife; that the movement of life consists only in this, that the world, through submission to reason, moves more and more from enmity and discord to concord and union. And admitting this, he cannot help noticing that people who used to eat one another no longer do so; that those who used to kill captives and their own children no longer put them to death; that the military who used to pride themselves on murder no longer boast of it; that those

who instituted slavery abolish it; that those who used to slay animals begin to tame them and to kill less of them, and instead of feeding on the bodies of animals now begin to feed on their eggs and milk; and that in the world of plants, too, men are beginning to be less destructive. Man sees that the best specimens of humanity condemn the search for enjoyments and enjoin self-restraint, while the very best men, whom posterity extols, set examples of sacrificing their own lives for the good of others. He sees that the very thing he only admitted under pressure of his reasonable consciousness, is actually taking place in the world and is confirmed by the past life of humanity.

More than this: even more powerfully and convincingly than by reason and history, this same thing is shown to man by his own innate desire which draws him, as to an immediate good, towards that same activity shown to him by reason and expressed in his heart by love.

## XX

*The demands of personality seem incompatible with those of reasonable consciousness.*

REASON, reflection, history, and inner feeling, all, it would seem, convince man of the correctness of this understanding of life; but to a man brought up in the doctrines of the world it still seems that the satisfaction of the demands of his reasonable consciousness and of his feeling cannot be the law of his life.

‘What! Not struggle with others for one’s personal welfare, not seek enjoyment, not ward off suffering, and not fear death? Why that is impossible, it is the renunciation of life itself! How can I renounce my personality when I feel its demands



which my reason recognizes as legitimate?" cultured people of our society say with full assurance.

It is a remarkable thing that simple labouring folk who have cultivated their intelligence very little, hardly ever defend the claims of personality; they always feel in themselves demands opposed to those of personality. A complete denial of the demands of the reasonable consciousness and, above all, a denial of the justice of those demands and a defence of the rights of personality is met with only among rich, refined, and cultured people.

An intellectual, effeminate, idle person will always prove that personality has its inalienable rights. A famished man will not prove that a man must eat—he is aware that everybody knows it and that it is impossible to prove or disprove it: he will simply eat.

This occurs because the simple, and as we say uneducated, man who has spent all his life in bodily toil, has not depraved his reason but has kept it in all its integrity and strength.

But a man who has all his life thought not merely of insignificant and futile matters but also of things such as it is not natural for man to think about, has not a free mind. His reason is occupied on matters unnatural to him—with the consideration of the needs of his personality, with their development and increase, and with devising means for their gratification.

'But I feel the demands of my personality, so they must be legitimate,' say so-called cultured people reared in the world's doctrines.

How indeed can they help feeling the demands of their personality? The whole life of such people is directed to the supposed increase of its welfare. And the good of their personality appears to them to consist in the gratification of its needs; and these

needs are all those conditions of individual existence to which their attention is directed. The needs of which they are conscious—those to which they have directed their attention—always grow to infinite proportions as a result of this attention, and the gratification of these overgrown needs hides from them the demands of their true life.

So-called social science takes as the basis of its investigations the study of man's needs, forgetting the circumstance (so inconvenient for it) that a man's needs may either be non-existent (as in the case of a man committing suicide or dying of hunger) or literally innumerable.

There are as many needs of existence for animal man as there are phases of this existence; and there are as many phases as there are radii of the globe. There are the needs of food, drink, air, and the exercise of all the muscles and nerves; needs of work, rest, amusement, and family life; needs of science, art, religion, and variations of them; needs of the child, the youth, the adult, the old man, the girl, the woman, and the old woman; needs of the Chinaman, the Parisian, the Russian, the Laplander; needs corresponding to the habits of different races; needs of illnesses. . . .

One could count up for ever without counting everything in which the needs of man's personal existence may consist. Every condition of existence may constitute a need, and the conditions of existence are innumerable.

Only those conditions which are recognized, however, are called needs. But these recognized conditions, as soon as they are recognized, lose their actual importance and receive an exaggerated importance given them by the attention directed to them, and they conceal the true life from us.

What are called needs, that is, the conditions of

man's animal existence, may be compared to innumerable inflatable globules of which a body is composed. All these globules are of equal size and have their place, and are not crushed as long as they are not inflated. In the same way the needs of man are equal and have their appointed place and are not felt painfully so long as man accepts them unconsciously. But it is only necessary to begin to inflate a globule (and it can be inflated so as to occupy more room than all the others) for it to crush its fellows and be crushed itself. So it is with the needs of life, it is only necessary to direct attention to any one of them and that recognized need can take up the whole of life and cause man's whole being to suffer.

## XXI

*What is needed is not a renunciation of personality, but its subjection to reasonable consciousness.*

YES, to assert that man does not feel the demands of his reasonable consciousness but only those of his personality, is to assert that we have employed all our intelligence to intensify our animal desires, and that these have taken possession of us and conceal from us the true human life. The weeds of rank-growing vices have choked the shoots of true life.

How could it be otherwise in our age, when it has been, and is, plainly declared by those who are considered to be teachers, that the highest perfection of a human being lies in a general development of the refined wants of his personality, that the good of the masses lies in their having many requirements and being able to satisfy them, and that the good of man consists in the gratification of his desires?

How can people brought up in that teaching fail to affirm that they are unconscious of the demands of reasonable consciousness and are only conscious

of those of their personality? How can they feel the demands of reason when their reason has been entirely devoted to the intensification of their appetites? How can they renounce the demands of their appetites when those appetites have absorbed their whole life?

'Renunciation of the personality is impossible!' these men usually say, purposely trying to twist the question, and substituting the idea of renunciation of the personality for the idea of its submission to the law of reason.

'It is contrary to nature,' they say, 'and therefore impossible.' But it is not a question of renouncing the personality. For a rational man personality is what breathing and the circulation of the blood are for the animal personality. How can the animal personality renounce the circulation of the blood? It cannot even be discussed. And similarly there can be no question for a reasonable man of renouncing his personality. For a reasonable man personality is as indispensable a condition of his life as the circulation of the blood is for his animal personality.

The animal personality cannot and does not formulate any demands. These demands are made by reason falsely directed—reason directed not to the guiding and illuminating of life but to increasing the personal desires.

The needs of the animal personality can always be satisfied. Man has not the right to say: What shall I eat? How shall I be clothed? If he lives a rational life all his needs are satisfied as are those of a bird or a flower. Indeed, what thinking man can believe that the wretchedness of his existence can be diminished by making provision for his personality?

The wretchedness of man's existence is not caused by his animal personality but by his considering life

and good to be in this personality alone. Only then do the contradictions, divisions, and sufferings of man appear.

A man's sufferings begin only when, to conceal from himself the demands of his reasonable consciousness, he employs his powers of reason to strengthen and increase the endlessly expanding demands of his personality.

It is unnecessary and impossible to renounce personality, as it is to renounce any of the conditions of man's existence; but neither should man regard those conditions as being life itself—indeed he cannot do so. We can and should make use of the present conditions of life, but must not and should not regard these conditions as the aim of life. To return to unity and to obtain the good in striving towards which his life consists, it is necessary for man to renounce not his animal personality but its welfare, and to cease to regard that animal personality as life itself.

From the remotest times the great teachers of humanity have preached the great doctrine that it is an annihilation of life for man to regard his life as consisting solely in his personality, and that the renunciation of the welfare of the personality is the only way to attain life.

'Yes, but what is this? It is Buddhism!' the men of our time usually reply. 'It is Nirvana, it is standing on a pillar!'

And having said this they imagine that they have most successfully refuted what they all know perfectly well and what cannot be concealed from anyone—that the personal life is wretched and entirely devoid of meaning.

'This is Buddhism—Nirvana!' say they, and think that by these words they have refuted what has been, and still is, accepted by thousands of millions of

people, and what each of us in the depth of his soul knows perfectly well—namely, that to live for the pursuit of individual ends is fatal and meaningless, and that if there is any escape from this ruinous and senseless condition it is certainly to be found in the renunciation of the welfare of the personality.

They are not at all abashed by the fact that the greater part of mankind have so understood and do so understand life, that the greatest minds have so understood it, and that it cannot be understood otherwise. They are so convinced that all the problems of life can be, if not solved in the most satisfactory way, at least evaded by telephones, operettas, bacteriology, electric light, roburite, and so on, that the idea of the renunciation of the personal welfare seems to them merely an echo of ancient ignorance.

But yet these unfortunates do not suspect that the crudest Hindu who in order to reach Nirvana renounces personal welfare by standing for years on one leg, is incomparably more alive than they—the brutalized representatives of our contemporary European society, who fly over the world on railways and exhibit their bestial condition to the whole world by means of electric light. That Hindu has understood that there is a contradiction between the life of personality and reasonable life, and he solves it as best he can; but the men of our cultured world have not merely failed to understand that contradiction but do not even believe that it exists. The discovery that human life is not merely personal existence—a truth humanity reached by thousands of years of spiritual toil—has become in the moral world a truth for man (though not for an animal): a truth even more unquestionable and indestructible than the rotation of the earth and the law of gravitation. Every thinking man, scholar,

ignoramus, old man, or child, understands and recognizes this: it is hidden only from the most savage natives of Africa and Australia and from the brutalized and leisured people in our European cities and towns. This truth has become the possession of mankind, and if humanity cannot go back upon its accessory knowledge in mechanics, algebra, and astronomy, still less can it go back upon its fundamental and principal science dealing with the meaning of life. It is impossible to forget and obliterate from the consciousness of humanity what it has gained during its thousands of years of existence—the conviction of the vanity, senselessness, and wretchedness, of the personal life. Attempts made to re-establish a savage, antediluvian conception of life as being personal existence, with which the so-called science of our European world is occupied, merely show the growth of man's reasonable consciousness more clearly, and make it palpable that humanity has already outgrown its baby clothes. Both the philosophical theories of self-destruction and the practice of suicide which increases to a terrible extent, show how impossible it is for humanity to return to a stage of consciousness it has outgrown.

Life as personal existence has been outgrown by humanity, and it is impossible to return to it and forget that man's personal existence has no meaning. Whatever we may write, or say, or discover, and however we may perfect our personal life, the denial of the possibility of personal welfare remains a truth that for all reasonable men in our age cannot be shaken. It is unquestionable.

'And yet it moves!' Our business is not to refute the theories of Galileo and Copernicus nor to devise some new Ptolemaic epicycles—they can no longer be devised: our business is to go farther and to make

further deductions from the knowledge that has already emerged from the general consciousness of humanity. The same is true with regard to the impossibility of individual happiness, which has been recognized alike by the Brahmins, by Buddha, Lao-Tsze, Solomon, the Stoics, and all true thinkers of humanity. We must not hide that discovery from ourselves nor try to elude it in all possible ways, but must boldly and plainly admit it and draw further deductions from it.

## XXII

*Love is a manifestation of the activity of personality subject to rational consciousness.*

A REASONABLE being cannot live for personal aims alone, because he finds all paths barred to him: all the aims to which his animal personality attracts him are clearly unattainable. Reasonable consciousness indicates other aims, and these are not merely attainable but yield full satisfaction to that consciousness. Nevertheless at first, under the influence of the false doctrine of the world, it seems to man that those aims are opposed to his welfare.

However much a man, brought up in our time with his personal desires developed and exaggerated, may try to recognize himself in his reasonable self, he does not feel in that self the longing for life he feels in his animal personality. It appears that the reasonable self only contemplates life, it does not itself live or feel the impulse towards life. The reasonable self does not feel attracted to life, yet the animal self must live and suffer, and the only remedy seems to be to get rid of life.

That is how the negative philosophers of our time (Schopenhauer and Hartmann) insincerely solve the problem—by denying life—though they remain in it instead of availing themselves of the possibility



of going out of it. And it is thus that the question is sincerely solved by those who commit suicide, when they leave a life which appears to them to offer nothing but evil. Suicide appears to them the only escape from the senselessness of human life in our day.

The reasoning both of pessimist philosophy and of ordinary suicides is this: There is an animal self which is attracted to life, but the yearnings of this self can never be gratified. There is another self, a rational one, which has no longing for life, but merely critically contemplates all the false joy of life and the passions of the animal self and rejects them entirely.

If I yield to the first I see that my life is meaningless and that I am heading for misery, in which I am more and more involved. If I abandon myself to the second—the reasonable self—I no longer feel any attraction to life. I see that it is absurd and impossible to live for the one thing I want, that is, my personal happiness. It would be possible to live for reasonable consciousness, but it is not worth while and I do not want to. Serve that source from whence I came—God? Why? If God exists, he will find people to serve him without me. And why should I do it? One can contemplate this play of life as long as one does not find it dull, and when it is dull one can go away and kill oneself. And that is what I will do.

Such is the contradictory conception of life mankind had reached even before Solomon and before Buddha, and to which the false teachers of our time wish to return.

The demands of the personality have been brought to the extreme limits of irrationality. Awakened reason rejects them, but they have grown to such an extent as to overwhelm man's consciousness, so that it seems to him that reason renounces life

altogether. It seems to him that if he excludes from his conception of life all that his reason rejects there will be nothing left. He no longer sees the residue that is left—that residue (of which life consists) seems to him void.

But the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness cannot comprehend it.

The teaching of truth is aware of this dilemma—of the choice between irrational existence and the negation of life—and solves it.

The teaching which has always been called the teaching of the good, the doctrine of truth, has shown men that in place of the delusive good they seek for their animal personality, real inalienable good is always within their reach here and now, not somewhere and some time. That good is not merely a thing deduced by reasoning, something that has to be sought somewhere, a blessing promised somewhere and some time, but is that familiar good towards which every unperverted human soul is directly drawn.

All men from their very earliest years know that besides the good of their animal personality there is another, a better, good in life, which is not only independent of the gratification of the appetites of the animal personality, but on the contrary the greater the renunciation of the welfare of the animal personality the greater this good becomes.

This feeling, solving all life's contradictions and giving the greatest good to man, is known to all. That feeling is *love*.

Life is the activity of animal personality subjected to the law of reason. Reason is the law to which, for his own good, man's animal personality must be subjected. Love is the only reasonable activity of man.

The animal personality longs for its own good; reason indicates to man the deceptiveness of per-

sonal good and leaves him only one path. Activity on that path is love.

Man's animal personality demands happiness. The reasonable consciousness shows him the wretchedness of all warring beings who struggle with one another, it shows him that welfare for his animal personality is inaccessible, and it shows him that the only good possible for him is such as will not cause strife with other beings, nor cessation of welfare, nor satiety, and in which there is not the spectre and terror of death.

And like a key made precisely for this lock, man discovers in his soul a feeling that gives him that very welfare which his reason indicates as the only one possible. This feeling not only solves the former contradiction of life, but, as it were, finds in that very contradiction an occasion to manifest itself.

The animal personality wishes to utilize man's personality for its own ends, but the feeling of love causes him to give his existence for the benefit of other beings.

The animal personality suffers, and those very sufferings and their relief form the chief subject for the activity of love. The animal personality, aiming at welfare, tends with its every breath towards the supreme evil—death, the spectre of which infringes every personal happiness. Love not only causes this terror to disappear, but under its influence man is even led to make the supreme sacrifice of his bodily existence for the good of others.

### XXIII

*The manifestation of love is impossible for those who do not understand the meaning of their life.*

EVERYONE knows that in the feeling of love there is something special, capable of solving all the

contradictions of existence and of giving man that complete bliss the striving for which constitutes his life.

'But it is a feeling which comes only rarely, does not last long, and is followed by still worse suffering,' say those who do not understand life.

To these men love appears to be not the sole and legitimate manifestation of life reasonable consciousness conceives it to be, but merely one of a thousand occurrences in life—one of the thousand different moods a man experiences during his existence. Sometimes he swaggers, sometimes he applies himself to science or art, sometimes he is absorbed by his work, or by ambition or acquisitiveness, or sometimes he loves. To men who do not understand life the state of love appears not as the very essence of human life but as an accidental mood, as independent of his will as all others through which a man passes during his life. It is even frequently said and written that love is a sort of irregular and tormenting disturbance of the regular course of life—rather like what the sunrise must appear to be to an owl.

Yet even these people feel that in the state of love there is something more important and special than in all other conditions. But not understanding life they also fail to understand love, and thus the state of love seems to them as miserable and deceptive as all the other states.

To love? . . . To love whom ? For how long?  
For a while—it is not worth the trouble,  
And no love can always endure . . .

These words precisely express people's confused consciousness that in love there is a remedy for the miseries of life and that it is the one thing that resembles true welfare; and at the same time it is a confession that love cannot be an anchor of

salvation for men who do not understand life. If there is no one to love, love passes. So love can only be a blessing if there is someone to love and someone who can be loved for ever. But as that is unattainable, there is no salvation in love and love is a deception and a suffering like all the rest.

Thus and only thus is love understood by those who teach, and have been taught, that life is nothing more than animal existence.

For such people love does not even correspond to the idea we all involuntarily attach to the word. It is not the kindly activity which gives what is good to those who love and to those who are loved. In the conception of people who conceive their life to be solely in their animal personality, love is often that feeling in consequence of which one mother for the welfare of her own baby will deprive another hungry infant of its mother's milk and suffer from anxiety as to the success of the nursing; that feeling which will cause a father to torment himself by taking the last morsel of food from hungry people in order to provide for his own children; that feeling which will cause a man who loves a woman, to suffer from that love and make her suffer, seduce her, or even destroy both himself and her from jealousy; that feeling by which it even happens that a man will violate a woman; that feeling which causes the men of one society to harm another in order to defend the interests of their own; the feeling by which a man will torment himself over a favourite occupation and by that occupation cause grief and suffering to those around him; that feeling which prevents men from enduring an affront to their beloved country, and causes them to strew the fields with the dead and wounded both of their own and other nations.

Nor is that all: for men who understand life to

consist in their animal personality the activity of love presents such difficulties that its manifestation becomes not merely tormenting but often even unendurable. 'You should not reason about love'—people who do not understand life usually say—'but should abandon yourself to the spontaneous feeling of preference you experience for certain people: that is real love.'

They are right that one cannot reason about love and that all reasoning about love destroys it. But the point is that only those people need not reason about love who have already used their reason to understand life and have renounced the welfare of the personal life: those who have not understood life and who live for the welfare of their animal personality cannot help reasoning about it. They must reason to be able to give themselves up to the feeling which they call love. Every manifestation of that feeling is impossible for them without reasoning and without solving unsolvable questions.

Indeed people have a preference for their own children, friends, wives, and country, above all other children, friends, wives, or countries—and they call this feeling love.

Love means in general to wish to do good. We all understand love so, and we cannot understand it otherwise. And so I love my child, my wife, my country—that is, I wish more good for my child, my wife, and my country, than for other children, wives, and countries. It can never happen that a man loves his own child only, or his wife or country only. Every man loves at the same time his baby, his wife, his children, his country, and men in general. Yet the conditions of welfare which his love makes him wish for various people he is fond of, are so interrelated that every loving activity of his for one of the beings he cares for, not merely

hinders his activity for others but is to their detriment.

So the questions arise—how one is to act, and on behalf of which love, and how? For which love should a man sacrifice another love? Whom should he love most and to whom do most good? To his wife or to his children—and to his own wife and children or to others? How can he serve his beloved country without infringing his love of wife, children, and friends? How is he finally to decide to what extent he should sacrifice his own personality, which is needed for the service of others? To what extent may he care for himself in order to be able to serve others whom he loves? All these questions seem very simple to men who have not tried to give themselves an account of the feeling they call love, but far from being simple, they are quite unanswerable.

Not for nothing did the lawyer put that very question to Jesus: Who is my neighbour? To answer these questions seems very easy only to those who forget the real conditions of human life.

Only if men were gods, such as we imagine gods to be, could they love certain chosen people, and only then could the preference of some to others be true love. But men are not gods: they live under the conditions in which living beings always live—devouring one another both literally and figuratively—and man as a rational being should see and know this. He should know that every material advantage is obtained by one being only at the expense of another.

However much the religious and scientific superstitions may assure men of a future golden age in which everyone will have enough, a reasonable man sees and knows that the law of his existence in time and space is that of a struggle of all

against each, of each against each, and of each against all.

In this crush and struggle of animal interests which make up the life of the world, it is impossible for a man to love some few chosen people, as men imagine who do not understand life. Even if a man loves some few chosen people he never loves only one. Every man loves his mother, wife, child, friends, and country, and even people in general. And love is not merely a word (as everyone agrees) but an activity directed to the welfare of others. Nor does this activity proceed in any definite order with the demands of his strongest love presenting themselves first, those of a feebler love next, and so on. The demands of love present themselves constantly and simultaneously and without any order. Here is a hungry old man for whom I have a little love and who has come to ask for food which I am keeping for the supper of my much-loved children: how am I to weigh the present demand of a feebler love against the future demand of a stronger?

These same questions were put by the lawyer to Jesus: 'Who is my neighbour?' Indeed how am I to decide whom to serve and to what extent? Men, or the fatherland? The fatherland, or my friends? My friends, or my wife? My wife, or my father? My father, or my children? My children, or myself (so as to be able to serve others when necessary)?

These are all demands of love, and they are all so interwoven with one another that the satisfaction of one demand deprives man of the possibility of satisfying others. If I admit that a freezing child may remain unclothed because my children may some day need the clothes I am asked to give, then I may also resist other demands of love out of consideration for my future children.

It is the same in regard to love of country, to the



choice of occupation, and to humanity. If a man may reject the present demands of a feeble love for the sake of the future demands of a greater love, is it not evident that such a man, even if he wished it with all his might, will never be able to judge to what extent he may reject present demands in favour of future demands; and therefore, not being able to decide that question, will always choose the manifestations of love which please him best—that is, he will yield not to the demands of love but to the demands of his personality. If a man decides that it is better for him to resist the demands of a present very feeble love for the sake of a future greater love he deceives himself and others and loves no one but himself.

Future love does not exist. Love is a present activity only. And a man who does not manifest love in the present has no love.

The same thing happens here as in the conception of life held by men who have no true life. If men were animals and had no reason they would exist like animals without reflecting on life, and their animal existence would be legitimate and happy. It is the same with love: if men were animals without reason they would love those for whom they had a preference—their whelps and their herd—without knowing that they loved them and without knowing that other wolves love their whelps and that members of other herds love their herd-companions, and their love and their life would be the love and life which is possible at the stage of consciousness occupied by them.

But men are rational beings and cannot help seeing that other beings have a similar love of their own, and that therefore these feelings of love must come into collision and produce something which is the very opposite of the idea of love.

If men use their reason to justify and strengthen this harmful animal feeling which they call love, giving it monstrous proportions, then it not only fails to be good but makes man (as has long been known) a most malignant and terrible animal. Then what is spoken of in the Gospels happens: 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!' If there were nothing in man but love for himself and his children there would not be a one-hundredth part of the evil that now exists among men. Ninety-nine hundredths of the evil among men comes from that false feeling which they, extolling it, call love, and which resembles love as much as animal life resembles the life of man.

Men who do not understand life call a preference for some conditions of the welfare of the animal personality over other conditions, by the name of love. When a man who does not understand life says that he loves his wife, or child, or friend, he merely says that the presence in his life of his wife, child, or friend, adds to his personal welfare.

These preferences have the same relation to love that animal existence has to life. And as men who do not understand life call existence life, so these men mean by love that preference for certain conditions of their personal existence to other conditions.

This feeling of preference for certain beings—as for instance for one's own children, or even for certain occupations such as science or art—we also call love, but such feelings, such preferences, endlessly varied, constitute the whole complexity of the visible and palpable animal life of man and cannot be called love because they lack the chief sign of love, which is an activity which has welfare for its aim and end.

The passion with which these preferences are

manifested merely shows the energy of the animal personality. The passion of the preference of some men for others, wrongly called love, is simply a wilding on which a true love may be grafted and may yield fruit. But as a wilding is not an apple-tree and does not bear fruit—or bears only bitter instead of sweet fruit—so partiality is not love, and does not do good to men; nay, it may even produce yet greater evil. Therefore a so-called love for a woman, for children, for friends, not to speak of love for science, art, or the fatherland, is nothing but a temporary preference for certain conditions of animal life to others.

## XXIV

*True love is the result of renouncing personal welfare.*

TRUE love becomes possible for man only when he renounces the welfare of his animal personality.

The possibility of true love begins only when man has understood that there is no welfare for his animal personality. Only then does all the sap of his life flow into the noble shoot of true love, growing with all the vigour of that wild tree the animal personality: Christ's teaching is a graft of this love, as he himself said. He spoke of himself and his love as the one vine which bears fruit, and said that every branch which does not bear fruit will be cut off.

Only he who has understood not only with his brain but with his whole life that 'whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it': that he who loves his life will ruin it, but he who hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal—only he knows true love.

'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daugh-

ter more than me is not worthy of me.' For if you love them which love you, it is not love. Love your enemies, love them that hate you.

People renounce their personality not as is generally supposed, by love of father, son, wife, friends, and kind and amiable people, but only by becoming conscious of the vanity of personal existence and the impossibility of welfare for the personality. Therefore man comes to know true love by renouncing his personal life and only then can he truly love his father, son, wife, children, and friends.

Love is preferring other creatures to ourselves—to our animal personality.

Disregard of the immediate interests of our personality to obtain the more remote aims of the same personality (as occurs in cases of so-called love that has not sprung from self-abnegation) is only a preference for some beings over others for personal advantage. True love, before it becomes an active feeling, must exist as a certain condition. The beginning of love, its root, is not an outburst of feeling which obscures reason, as is generally supposed, but is the most reasonable, luminous, and therefore calm and joyous condition, natural to children and to reasonable people.

This condition is one of benevolence towards all men, which is natural to the child, but in an adult arises only by renunciation and strengthens only in proportion to the renunciation of personal welfare. How often we hear the words: 'It is all the same to me, I don't want anything!' and with these words notice ill will to others. But let anyone try, even once, at a moment of ill will towards men to say to himself sincerely from his soul: 'It is all the same to me, I do not want anything,' and let him, if only for a while, renounce every individual desire, and every man, by this simple inner experiment will see

how, in proportion to the sincerity of his renunciation, all ill will at once disappears, and how goodwill towards all men—till then locked up in his heart—wells forth like a torrent.

Indeed love is a preference for others over oneself—we all understand it so, and cannot understand it otherwise. The magnitude of love is the magnitude of a fraction of which the numerator—my partiality and sympathy for others—does not depend on me; but the denominator—my love of myself—can be infinitely increased or diminished by me in accordance with the importance I attach to my animal personality. But the estimates of our world about love and its degree are estimates of the magnitude of fractions judged by the numerators alone without reference to their denominators.

True love always has at its root a renunciation of the welfare of personality and the goodwill to all men that results therefrom. True love for certain people—relations or strangers—can only grow in this general benevolence. And only such love can give the true good of life and solve the apparent contradiction between the animal and the reasonable consciousness.

Love that has not at its root a renunciation of personality and the goodwill to all men resulting therefrom is only animal life, and is exposed to the same and even greater ills, and is more senseless, than life without this so-called love. The feeling of partiality which is wrongly called love, not only does not do away with the struggle for existence or release the personality from the pursuit of pleasures, or deliver it from death, but it only darkens life yet more, intensifying the struggle, increasing the eagerness for enjoyments for oneself and for others, and augmenting the fear of death for oneself and for them.

A man who understands life as consisting in the existence of his animal personality cannot love, because love must appear to him to be an activity directly opposed to his life. The life of such a man lies solely in the welfare of his animal existence, and love first of all demands a sacrifice of that welfare. Even if a man who does not understand life, sincerely wished to devote himself to the activity of love, he would be unable to do so until he had understood life and changed his whole relation to it. A man who places his life in the welfare of the animal personality increases the means of his animal welfare all his life long, by acquiring riches and preserving them, obliging others to contribute to his animal welfare, and distributing his favours among those who are more necessary to ensure the welfare of his personality. How is he to sacrifice his life when it is still supported not by himself but by others? Still harder is it for him to choose whom he should serve, and to which of those he prefers he should transmit the advantages he has accumulated.

To be able to give his life he must first give up the surplus he takes from others for the welfare of his own personality, and then do the impossible: decide whom he should serve with his life. Before he can love, that is, do good by self-sacrifice, he must cease from hatred, that is, cease to do harm to others and cease from preferring some people to others for his own personal welfare.

An activity of love which always satisfies himself and others is only possible for one who does not place welfare in the personal life and is therefore not concerned about that false good, and so has set free in himself that benevolence towards all men which is natural to man. The welfare of life for such a man is in love, as that of a plant is in light, and so—as a plant that is quite uncovered cannot and does

not ask in what direction it should grow, whether the light is good and whether it should not wait for another more favourable light, but takes the sole light that there is in the world and reaches towards it—a man who has renounced the welfare of his personality does not reason about what he should give back of what he has taken from other men, and to what beloved beings, and whether there is not some still better love than that which makes demands on him—but gives himself up entirely and devotes his existence to the love that is within his reach and which he sees before him. Only such love gives full satisfaction to the rational nature of man.

## XXV

*Love is the sole and complete activity of true life.*

THERE is no other love than that which lays down its life for a friend. Love is only really love when it is a sacrifice of self. Only when a man not only gives to another his time and strength, but wears out his body for the loved object and gives his life for it, do we all recognize that this is love; only in such love do we all find bliss—the recompense of love—and only because there is such love in men does this world exist. A mother who suckles her baby gives herself directly, gives her own body, to nourish her child who but for her would not live. This is love. The same is done by any workman who sacrifices himself to provide for others, wearing out his body and bringing himself nearer to death. And such love is possible only to one who is free from obstacles which—when they interpose between his self-sacrifice and those he would serve—render such sacrifice impossible. A mother who gives her baby over to a wet-nurse cannot love it, and a man

who acquires and retains money cannot love his fellow man.

'He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. . . . Let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and in truth. Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart. . . . Herein is love made perfect in us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement; because as he is, even so may we be in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love.' [1 John ii. 9-11: iii. 18-19: iv. 17-18]

Such love alone gives true life to man.

Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, said the lawyer to Jesus. And to this Jesus replied: 'Thou hast answered right: this do'—that is, love God and thy neighbour—'and *thou shalt live.*'

True love is life itself.

'We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren,' says Christ's disciple.

'He that loveth not his brother abideth in death'.

Only he lives who loves.

Love in the teaching of Jesus is life itself: not an irrational and decaying life, full of suffering, but a life blessed and endless. And we know this. Love is not a deduction of reason, not the result of a



certain activity, it is itself the one joyous activity of the life surrounding us on all sides and which we all knew in ourselves from our earliest recollections of childhood up to the time when the false teachings of the world soiled our souls and rendered us incapable of experiencing such love.

Love is not a preference for something which adds to the temporal welfare of a man's personality (like love for selected persons or objects) but is an aspiration for the welfare of others which remains in man after he has renounced the welfare of his animal personality.

Where is the living man who does not know this blissful feeling—by having experienced it at least once, and most frequently in early childhood when his soul was not yet sullied by the falsehoods which stifle life in us—this blissful feeling of tenderness which makes one want to love everybody: relations, father, mother, brothers, bad people and enemies, the dog, the horse, and the grass, which makes one wish that it should be well with all, that all should be happy, and still more that one should oneself be the cause of their happiness and give up one's whole life to make everybody happy and satisfied for ever? That is the love in which man's life consists.

This love, in which alone there is true life, springs up in man's soul like a tender shoot scarcely noticeable among the coarse shoots of rough grass—those various appetites of man—which resemble it and which we erroneously call love. At first it seems to others and to himself that this shoot—from which should grow the tree in which the birds will lodge—is just the same as all the other shoots. At first men even prefer the shoots of coarse weeds which grow more rapidly, and the one shoot of life is stifled and dies. But still oftener something worse than this

happens: men hear that among these shoots there is one real vital shoot called love, and they tread it down and begin in place of it to rear another shoot of the coarse weeds—calling it by the name of love. And even worse than that happens: men seize the shoot itself with their rough hands, and cry, ‘Here it is! We have found it! Now we know it and will cultivate it. Love! Love! This is the sublime feeling. Here it is!’ And they begin to transplant it, to try to improve it, and they handle it and tread it down, so that it dies without having flowered; and then these men or others exclaim: ‘This is all absurdity, folly, and sentimentality.’ The shoot of love, tender when it first appears, and sensitive to any touch, only becomes strong when fully developed. All that people do to it only harms it. It needs only one thing—that nothing should hide from it the sun of reason, which alone causes it to grow.

## XXVI

*Men’s efforts to achieve an impossible improvement of their existence deprive them of true life.*

ONLY consciousness of the phantasy and illusion of animal existence, and the liberation within him of the one true life of love, gives man what is good. And what do people do to obtain this good? Men whose existence is nothing but a slow destruction of the personality and an approach towards the inevitable death of that personality and who cannot help but know this, these men during their whole existence try to their utmost—and are completely preoccupied in endeavouring—to maintain this personality which perishes and to satisfy its appetites, and they thus deprive themselves of the possibility of the only good in life—love.

The activity of these men who do not understand life is directed, during their whole existence, to struggling for the welfare of their personality: to procuring enjoyments, freeing themselves from sufferings, and warding off the death they cannot escape.

But the increase of enjoyments increases the intensity of the struggle, the susceptibility to suffering, and brings death nearer. There is only one way to hide from oneself this inevitable approach of death—to increase the enjoyments yet more. But the increase of enjoyments reaches its limit; they cannot be further increased, but change to suffering, and there remains only a sensitiveness to suffering and the terror of that death which steadily approaches in the midst of the pain. And a vicious circle appears: one thing is the cause of the other, and the one augments the other. The chief misfortune of the life of men who do not understand life is that what they regard as enjoyments (all the enjoyments of the life of riches) are such as cannot be distributed equally among all but must be taken from others and obtained by force, by evil which destroys the possibility of that goodwill towards men from which love grows. So that enjoyments are always directly opposed to love, and the stronger they are the more they are opposed to it. So that the stronger and more intense the activity for the attainment of pleasures, the more impossible becomes the sole welfare accessible to man—which is love.

Life is understood, not as reasonable consciousness conceives it to be—as an invisible but unquestionable submission, at every moment, of the animal self to the law of reason, releasing that goodwill towards all men that is natural to man and the activity of love which results from it—but merely as

bodily existence lasting for a given interval of time, in conditions arranged by us which exclude the possibility of goodwill towards all men.

To men who hold the worldly view and have directed their minds to the establishment of certain conditions of existence, it appears that an increase of the welfare of life depends on a better external arrangement of their existence, but this better external arrangement depends on a greater coercion of other men, which is diametrically opposed to love. So that the better their arrangement the less possibility there remains to them of love, that is, of life.

Never having employed their reason to understand that for all men the good of animal existence is equal to zero, these men have taken this zero for a quantity capable of being increased or decreased, and devote their unemployed reason to this supposed augmentation and multiplication.

Men do not see that this nothing, this zero, always remains equal to any other zero, whatever it may be multiplied by; they do not see that 'the existence of the animal personality of each man is equally miserable and cannot be made happy by any external conditions. Men will not see that one existence, as a physical existence, cannot be happier than another—it is a law like that by which the water of a lake cannot at any one point be lifted above the general surface of the lake.

Having distorted their reason men do not see this, but employ their distorted reason and thus pass their whole existence on this impossible task of lifting the water at certain places on the surface of the lake—rather like what children do when bathing, and call it 'brewing beer'.

It seems to them that people's existence may be more or less desirable and happy. The existence of

a poor labourer or of a sick person, they say, is bad and unhappy; the existence of a rich or of a healthy man is good and happy. And they apply all the strength of their reason to avoiding a bad, unhappy, poor, and sickly existence, and arranging for themselves a good, rich, healthy, and happy one.

For generations they have been devising means of arranging and maintaining these various very happy lives, and the programmes of these supposedly better lives (as they call their animal existence) are transmitted from generation to generation.

Men vie with one another in doing their best to maintain this happy *life* which they have inherited from the arrangement of their parents, or to create a new and still happier *life* for themselves. They imagine that by maintaining their inherited arrangement of existence, or by arranging a new one for themselves which seems to them better, they are really doing something.

Encouraging each other in this illusion men often become so sincerely convinced that life consists in this insensate treading of the water, the senselessness of which is evident to themselves—they really convince themselves of it to such an extent—that they turn contemptuously away from the calls to true life which they constantly hear in the teachings of truth; in the examples of the lives of living men; and in their own hearts, in which the voice of reason and love though deadened is never completely stifled.

And so a wonderful thing occurs. An enormous number of people, having the possibility of living a reasonable and loving life, are behaving like sheep who are being dragged out of a burning building and who, imagining that people want to throw them into the flames, employ all their strength to struggle against those who are trying to save them.

Through fear of death men do not wish to escape from it; from fear of suffering they torment themselves, and deprive themselves of the only welfare and life that is possible for them.

## XXVII

*Fear of death is only consciousness of the unsolved contradiction of life.*

‘THERE is no death,’ says the voice of truth to man. ‘I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?’ [John xi. 25-6]

‘There is no death,’ say all the great teachers of the world, and millions of men who have understood the meaning of life say it also and have borne witness to it by their lives. And the same is felt at moments of enlightenment by every man who is really alive. But men who have not understood life cannot help being afraid of death. They see it and believe in it.

‘No death?’ these men indignantly and angrily exclaim. ‘That is a sophistry. Death is before our eyes, it has mown down millions and will mow us down too. However much you may say that it does not exist, it is with us all the time. . . . Look at it!’

And they do indeed see what they speak of—as a man who is mentally deranged sees the ghost that frightens him. He cannot touch that ghost, which has never touched him; he knows nothing of its intentions, but this imaginary ghost causes him so much fear and suffering that he is deprived of capacity to live. And it is the same with death. Man does not know his own death and can never know it: it has never yet touched him and he knows nothing of its intentions. Of what, then, is he afraid?

'It has never seized me yet, but it will seize me I am sure—it will seize and destroy me. And that is terrible!' say men who do not understand life.

If men who have this false idea of life could reflect calmly and if they reasoned sensibly, they ought on the basis of the conception they have of life to come to the conclusion that there is nothing disagreeable or terrible in the fact that our bodily existence will undergo the change we call death, which we see occurring unceasingly in all beings.

I shall die. What is there terrible in that? See how many changes have occurred and are occurring in my bodily existence without my fearing them! Why should I fear this change which has not yet occurred, and in which there is nothing contrary to my reason and experience, and which is so comprehensible, so familiar, and so natural to me that in the course of my life I have often made, and still make, calculations in which I take the death of animals and of people as a necessary and often pleasant condition of life. What is there terrible about it?

You see there are only two strictly logical views of life: the false view in which life is understood as being those visible phenomena which take place in my body from birth to death; and the other true one in which life is understood as being that invisible consciousness of life which I have in myself. The one view is false and the other true, but both are logical; and men may have the one or the other, but neither of them admits of fear of death.

The first, the false view, which takes life to be the visible phenomena of the body from birth to death, is as old as the world. It is not, as many think, a view of life elaborated by the materialistic science and philosophy of our time; contemporary science and philosophy have only carried this conception to its

final limits, making it more evident than ever that this false view is incompatible with the fundamental demands of human nature. It is the ancient, primitive outlook of men at the lowest stage of development, and was expressed among the Chinese, the Buddhists, the Hebrews, in the Book of Job, and in the sentence: 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'

That view as now expressed is this: Life is a fortuitous concourse of atoms, which occurs in space and time. What we call our consciousness is not life but only an illusion of the senses by which it appears to us that life is in that consciousness. Consciousness is a spark kindled in matter under certain conditions. This spark flares up, burns, then dies down, and is finally extinguished. This spark (consciousness) experienced by matter during a certain period of time between two eternities—is nothing. And although consciousness is aware of itself and of all the infinite world, and sits in judgement upon itself and all the infinite world, and though it sees all the play of accidents in this world and—what is more important—calls that play accidental, in contradistinction to something that is not accidental, this consciousness itself is nothing but a product of inanimate matter, a phantom, which appears and disappears leaving no trace or meaning. It is all the product of endlessly changing matter, and what is called life is merely a certain condition of dead matter.

Such is one view of life, and it is quite a logical one. According to this view, man's reasonable consciousness is only an accident accompanying a certain condition of matter, and so what in our consciousness we call life, is a phantom. Nothing exists but what is dead. What we call life is the play of death. With such a view of life not only should



death not be terrible, on the contrary life should be terrible because it is something unnatural and irrational, as it is held to be in the doctrines of the Buddhists and the modern pessimists—Schopenhauer and Hartmann.

The other view of life is this: Life is only that which I am conscious of in myself. But I am always conscious of my life not as I was or shall be (that is how I reflect on life) but as I am—never beginning anywhere and never ending anywhere. The conception of time and space is incompatible with my consciousness of life. My life is manifested in time and space, but that is only its manifestation. The life of which I am conscious I recognize outside of time and space. So with this view (quite contrary to the other view) it turns out that it is not the consciousness of life that is a phantom, but everything that is limited by time and space. Therefore, according to this view, the cessation in time and space of the bodily existence has no reality and cannot end or even disturb true life. In this view death does not exist.

Neither in the one nor the other view could there be any dread of death if men held firmly to either.

Neither as an animal nor as a rational being can man fear death: the animal having no consciousness of life does not see death, and the reasonable being, having consciousness of life, cannot see animal death as anything more than part of a natural and never ceasing movement of matter. What man fears is not death, which he does not know, but life, which his animal and rational existence alone know. The feeling which is expressed in men by the fear of death is nothing but the consciousness of an intrinsic contradiction of life, just as the dread of ghosts is merely a symptom of a diseased state of mind.

'I shall cease to be—I shall die. All that constitutes my life will die,' says one voice to man. 'I am,' says the other voice, 'and I cannot and ought not to die. I ought not to die, yet I am dying.'

It is not death, but this contradiction, that causes the fright that seizes man at the thought of physical death: the fear of death does not result from his fearing the cessation of his animal existence, but from his imagining that something which cannot and should not die, is dying. To think of future death is only to carry into the future the death which is now proceeding. The apparition of the future bodily death is not the awakening of the thought of death, but on the contrary the awakening of the thought of the life man ought to possess but does not. This feeling is the same that a man might experience who awakened to life in the grave, under ground: 'Life exists, but I am in death. Here is—death!' It seems to him that what exists and ought to exist is being destroyed. And man's mind goes astray and is terrified. The best proof that the fear of death is not in reality a fear of death but of false life, is that people often kill themselves from that very fear. Men are horrified at the thought of death not because they fear that their life may end with it, but because physical death clearly shows them the necessity of the true life which they do not possess. And this is why men who do not understand life so dislike to think of death. For them to think of death is the same as to admit that they do not live as their reasonable consciousness demands that they should.

Men who are afraid of death, fear it because it appears to them as nothingness and darkness, but they see the nothingness and darkness because they do not see life.

## XXVIII

*Bodily death destroys the body that is limited in space, and the consciousness that is limited in time, but it cannot destroy the special relation of each being to the world, which is the basis of life.*

BUT even those men who do not see life, if they were to go closer up and touch the apparitions that frighten them, would find that for them too the apparition is only an apparition and not a reality.

The fear of death is always due to the fact that people are afraid that at their bodily death they will lose their individual *self* which they feel constitutes their life. 'I shall die, my body will decompose, and my *self* will be destroyed—that *self* which has lived in my body so many years.'

Men esteem that *self* of theirs and assuming it to be coincident with their bodily life conclude that the cessation of their bodily life must destroy it.

That is a very ordinary conclusion and it seldom enters anyone's head to doubt it, yet this conclusion is quite arbitrary. Men, both those who consider themselves materialists and those who consider themselves spiritualists, are so accustomed to thinking that their *self* is the consciousness of their body which has lived so-and-so many years, that it does not occur to them to verify the justice of such an assumption.

I have lived for fifty-nine years and all this time I have been conscious of myself in my body, and it seems to me that just this consciousness of myself has been my life. But this only seems to be so. In reality I have lived neither fifty-nine years, nor fifty-nine thousand years, nor fifty seconds. Neither my body nor the period of its existence at all determines the life of my *self*. If at any moment of my

life I asked my consciousness: What am I? I should reply: 'Something which thinks and feels,' that is, something related to the world in a quite special way. Only this do I recognize as being my *self*, and nothing else. Of when and where I was born, when and where I began to feel and think as I now do, I am not at all conscious. My consciousness only tells me that I exist: I exist with this relation of mine to the world in which I now find myself. I cannot remember my birth; of my childhood, of the period of my youth, of my adult years, of quite recent times, I often remember nothing. Or if I do remember something, or am reminded of something out of my past, I remember and recall those things almost in the same way as I remember what is told me about other people. So on what ground do I declare that during the whole time of my existence I have been one single *self* and the same *self*? There is not and has not been any single body that is mine: my body has consisted, and does consist, of matter continually flowing through something immaterial and invisible which recognizes what flows through it as its own. My entire body has changed completely many times: nothing remains of the old one. Muscles, intestines, bones, and brain, have all changed.

My body is one, only because of the existence of something immaterial which recognizes this changing body as one and its own. This immaterial something is what we call consciousness: it alone maintains the unity of the whole body and recognizes it as one and its own. Without that consciousness of myself as distinct from all else, I should know nothing either of my own or any other life. And so on a first consideration it would seem that consciousness—the basis of everything—must be constant. But this too is incorrect: consciousness

is not constant. Even now during our whole life the phenomenon of sleep repeats itself. It seems to us very simple because we all sleep every day, but it is positively incomprehensible if we admit—as must be admitted—that during sleep consciousness sometimes entirely ceases.

Every day consciousness ceases entirely during sound sleep and is then again renewed. And yet this consciousness is the only basis which holds the whole body together and recognizes it as its own. It would seem that with the cessation of consciousness the body ought to fall to pieces and lose its identity, but that does not happen either in natural or in artificial sleep.

Moreover, not only does the consciousness which holds the whole body together periodically disappear without the body falling to pieces—but consciousness changes like the body. Just as there is nothing in the substance of my body that was there ten years ago—as there has not been one identical body—so there has not been in me one identical consciousness. My consciousness as a three-year-old child and my present consciousness are as different as the substance of my present body from my body of thirty years ago. There is no one consciousness but a series of consecutive consciousnesses which may be divided up to infinity.

So the consciousness which holds my whole body together and recognizes it as its own is not a single thing but something intermittent and changing. Man has not a single consciousness of himself as we usually imagine, any more than he has one single body. A man has neither one and the same body nor one and the same consciousness separating that body from all else—there is not a single consciousness constantly in man, remaining one and the same during his whole life, there is only a series

of successive consciousnesses united by something—and yet man feels himself to be himself.

Our body is not single and that which recognizes this continuously changing body as one and as our own is not itself continuous in duration, but is only a series of changing consciousnesses, and we have already repeatedly lost both our body and our consciousness: we lose our body constantly and we lose our consciousness every time we fall asleep; and every day and every hour we feel these changes in ourselves and are not at all afraid of them. If then there is any *self* of ours which we fear to lose at death, this *self* cannot be in this body which we call ours or in this consciousness which we call ours at a given time, but it must be something different which unites the whole series of consecutive consciousnesses into one.

But what is this something which binds together all the consciousnesses that succeed one another in time? What is this most radical and particular *self*—not consisting of my body or of the series of consciousnesses which have appeared in it—this fundamental *self* on which as on a core are strung the various consciousnesses that follow one another in a time-sequence? The quest seems very profound and wise, yet there is not a child who does not know the answer, and does not utter it twenty times a day. 'I like this . . . I don't like that.' These words are very simple, yet they contain the answer to the question as to what is the special *self* which links all the consciousness into one. It is this *self*, which likes this but does not like that. Why someone likes this but does not like that no one knows, and yet that is precisely what forms the basis of the life of each man and which unites together all the consciousnesses (differing as to the time of their occurrence) of each individual man. The external world acts

on all men alike but the impressions of men, even when placed in quite identical conditions, vary endlessly both as to the number of impressions received and their endless capacity for division and as to their strength. From these impressions the series of consecutive consciousnesses of each man are composed. But all these successive consciousnesses are united only by that which causes some impressions at the present time to act and others not to act on his consciousness. And these or those particular impressions act or do not act on a man only because he likes this more or less and does not like that.

Only in consequence of this greater or lesser degree of love does a certain series of some and not other consciousnesses form in a man. So that only in the faculty of loving one thing more or less and not loving another, does a man's special and fundamental *self* consist, in which are grouped all the disconnected and intermittent consciousnesses. And this faculty, although it is developed during our life, has been brought by us into this life ready formed from an unseen and unknowable past.

Man's peculiar faculty of loving one thing more or less and not loving another, is usually called character. And that word is often understood to mean the peculiarities of the qualities of each individual man which result from certain conditions of place and time. But this is not correct. The essential attribute of man to love one thing more or less and not to love another is not due to conditions of time and place, but on the contrary, the conditions of space and time act or do not act on a man only because when he enters the world he already has a very definite capacity for loving one thing and not loving another. That is why the inner selves of men born and brought up under exactly the same

conditions of space and time often present very sharp contrasts.

The thing that unites all the disconnected consciousnesses which are in turn united into one in our body is something very definite, although independent of the conditions of time and space, and it is brought by us into the world from a sphere beyond time and space; and that *something* present in the particular relationship to the world I am conscious of in myself, is my real and actual *self*. I know myself as that fundamental attribute, and if I know other men I know them only as some particular relationship to the world. No one entering into serious spiritual intercourse with men allows himself to be guided by their external symptoms, but tries to penetrate to their essence, that is, to know their relation to the world, what they love and to what degree, and what they do not love.

Each separate animal—horse, dog, or cow—if I know it and have serious spiritual intercourse with it, is known to me not by its external appearance but by the special relation to the world in which it stands—what it likes and to what extent, and what it does not like. If I know the different kinds of animals I know them, strictly speaking, not so much by their external appearance as because each of them (lion, fish, or spider) presents a special relationship to the world common to its species. All lions in general like one thing, all fishes something else, and all spiders, again, something else: only because they like different things are they separated in my perception as different living creatures.

That I do not also distinguish its particular relation to the world in each of these beings, does not prove that that relationship does not exist but only that the special relation to the world which forms the life of one particular spider is so remote from



my own relation to the world that I have not yet understood it as Silvio Pellico understood his particular spider.

The foundation of all that I know of myself and of the whole world is this special relationship of mine to the world, which enables me to recognize beings who find themselves also in a special relationship to the world. But my particular relation to the world was not determined in this life and did not begin with my body or with a series of consciousnesses that succeed each other in time.

And so my body, united into one by my temporal consciousness, may be destroyed, as also may my temporal consciousness itself, but my relation to the world, which forms my particular *self* and has created for me all that exists, cannot be destroyed. It cannot be destroyed because it alone exists. If it did not exist I should not know either the series of my consecutive consciousnesses or my body, or my own life or any other. And so the destruction of the body and of the consciousness cannot serve as evidence of the destruction of my special relation to the world—a relationship which did not begin and has not arisen in this life.

## XXIX

*The fear of death comes because men regard as life one small part of it, restricted by their own false conception.*

WE fear that at our bodily death we shall lose our particular *self*, which unites into one the body and the series of consciousnesses that have manifested themselves in time, but my particular *self* did not begin at my birth and so the cessation of

a certain temporary consciousness cannot destroy that which unites all my temporal consciousnesses into one.

Bodily death destroys effectually that which holds the body together—the consciousness of temporal life. But this happens to us continually every day when we fall asleep. The question is whether bodily death destroys that which unites in one all the successive consciousnesses—that is to say, my special relationship to the world. Before asserting that, we should first have to prove that this special relation to the world, which unites into one all the successive consciousnesses, was born with the bodily existence and therefore dies with it. But that is just what cannot be done.

Judging on the basis of my consciousness, I see what has united all my consciousnesses into one—namely, a certain susceptibility to one impression and indifference to another in consequence of which the one remains in me and the other disappears—that is, the degree of my love of good and hatred of evil—this special relationship of mine to the world which forms my individual self is not the product of some external cause but is the fundamental cause of all the other phenomena of my life.

Taking observation as the basis of my reasoning, it seems to me at first that the causes of the distinctive character of my special *self* lie in the distinctive characteristics of my parents and in the conditions that influenced them and me, but thinking further along that line I cannot but see that if the distinctive character of my special *self* is due to the distinctive characteristics of my parents and the conditions that influenced them, then it also lies in the characteristics of all my ancestors and in the conditions of their existence and so on back to infinity—that is to say, beyond time and space: so that my special *self*

originated outside space and time, which is just what I was conscious of.

On this and only on this basis, outside time and space, of my special relationship to the world which unites all the consciousnesses I can remember and those which preceded them (as Plato says and as we all feel in ourselves)—on just this basis, I say, of my special relationship to the world, dwells this special *self* which we fear will be destroyed at bodily death.

But it is only necessary to understand that the thing that unites all the consciousnesses into one (this which forms the special *self* of each man) is outside of time, has always existed and does exist, and that what can be broken up is only the series of consciousnesses of a certain time, and it becomes clear that the destruction by bodily death of the consciousness that came last in chronological order can as little destroy the true human *self* as daily sleep can. No one fears to fall asleep, though when we sleep the same thing happens as happens at death—namely a cessation of consciousness in time. Man does not fear to fall asleep though the cessation of consciousness is then the same as at death; and if he does not fear it, it is not because he has come to the conclusion that as he has fallen asleep before and has awakened he will therefore wake up again (that reflection is unsound: he may have wakened a thousand times and the thousand and first time may not do so)—no one ever reasons like that, and such an argument would not reassure him—but because he knows that his true *self* lives outside time and that therefore a cessation of consciousness that is manifested for him in time, cannot infringe his life.

If a man could go to sleep for a thousand years, as in the fairy-tale, he would fall asleep as quietly as when he sleeps for two hours. For the conscious-

ness of true, non-temporal life, an interval of a million years or of eight hours is all the same, because for such a life time does not exist.

If the body is destroyed the present consciousness is destroyed.

But it is time man became accustomed to the modifications of his body and to the successive changes of temporary consciousness. Such changes began as far back as the memory of man runs, and they have gone on unceasingly ever since. Man does not fear the changes that take place in his body, far from fearing them he often desires their acceleration—he wishes to grow up, to attain manhood, or to recover from illness. This that was once a piece of red flesh, with its whole consciousness consisting in the demands of its stomach, is now a bearded, reasonable man, or a loving woman with grown-up children. There is nothing left either in the body or in the consciousness of what there was before, and the man is not horrified by these changes which have brought him to his present condition but often welcomes them. What then is there terrible in the impending change? Annihilation? But man's special relationship to the world—that in which consciousness of true life exists and in which all these changes occur—did not begin with the birth of the body, but outside the body and outside time. How then can any change in time and space destroy what exists beyond them? Man fixes his attention on a very small part of his life (he does not wish to see the whole of it) and trembles lest this small and cherished part should be lost to sight. It reminds me of the story of the madman who imagined that he was made of glass. When he was knocked over he cried, 'Crash!' and immediately died. To possess life man must take the whole of it and not merely the small part that is

manifested in time and space. To him who will take the whole of life more will be added, but from him who takes only a part even that will be taken away.

### XXX

*True life lies in man's relationship to the world. The progress of life lies in the establishment of a new, higher relationship, and in the same way death is the entrance to a fresh relationship.*

WE cannot understand life except as a certain relationship to the world, that is how we understand it in ourselves and in other beings.

But in ourselves we understand life not only as a relationship to the world established once and for all, but also as the establishment of a new relationship by means of a greater and greater subjection of the animal personality to reason, and the manifestation of a greater degree of love. The inevitable destruction of the physical existence which we perceive in ourselves shows us that the relationship in which we stand to the world is not a permanent one, but that we must establish another. The establishment of this new relationship—that is to say, the movement of life—is what destroys our conception of death. Death presents itself only to the man who, not having recognized his life as consisting in the setting-up of a reasonable relationship to the world, and in its manifestation in himself by more and more love, has remained in the same relation, that is, with the same degree of love of one thing and dislike of another with which he entered into existence.

Life is an incessant movement, but by remaining in the same relation to the world and with the same degree of love with which he entered on life, such

a man feels the cessation of life, and death presents itself to him.

Only to such a man is death visible and terrible. His whole existence is but a continual death. Death is visible and terrible to him not only in the future but also in the present at every indication of a diminution of his animal life from infancy to old age. For the movement of existence from childhood to manhood though it appears to be a temporary increase of the physical forces is in reality the same hardening of the members and diminution of the suppleness and vitality of the body that goes on continually from birth till death. Such a man sees death continually before him and nothing can save him from it. Each day and hour his position grows worse and worse and nothing can improve it. His own relationship to the world, his love for one thing and hatred of another, appears to him to be merely a fixed condition of his existence, while the one real business of life—the establishment of a new relationship to the world and the growth of love—seems to him something quite unnecessary. His whole life is passed in an impossible attempt to avoid the unescapable diminution of life, its hardening, weakening, aging, and death.

But it is not so for a man who understands life. Such a man knows that he has brought into his present life from a past that is hidden from him his own special relationship to the world—his love of one thing and hatred of another. He knows that this love of one thing and hatred of another that he brought with him into this present existence is the very essence of his life, that it is not merely an accidental feature, but that it alone has the movement of life—and he places his life entirely in this movement, in this increase of love.

Considering his past in this life, he sees by the

series of consciousnesses he understands, that his relationship to the world has changed, his subjection to the law of reason has increased, and the strength and extent of his love has increased unceasingly, giving him ever more and more welfare independently of, and sometimes in directly inverse proportion to, the existence of his personality.

Such a man, having accepted his life from a past unseen by him, and conscious of its constant and unceasing growth, carries it on into an unseen future not merely with tranquillity but with joy.

It is said that illness, old age, decrepitude and dotage, destroy the consciousness and life of man. Of what man? I imagine John the Divine, according to tradition, falling into second childhood in his old age. The story goes that he uttered only the words: 'Brethren, love one another!' The little old man of a hundred, hardly able to move, with watering eyes, lisps only those three words: 'Love one another!' In such a man the animal existence gives no more than a feeble glimmer, it has been all absorbed by a new relationship to the world, by a new living being that can already no longer find place in the existence of the carnal man.

For a man who understands life to be what it really is, to distress himself because of a diminution of his life from illness and old age is as if a man on approaching the light were to regret that his shadow diminishes proportionately as he walks up to the light. To believe in the destruction of life because the body is destroyed, is the same as to believe that the disappearance of the shadow of an object when the object merges into full light, is a proof of the destruction of the object itself. Only a man who has looked at the shadow so long that at last he imagines it to be the object itself, could arrive at such a conclusion.

But to a man who knows himself not by his reflection (his existence in space and time) but by the growth of his loving relationship to the world, the disappearance of the shadow of spatial and temporal conditions is only the indication of a greater degree of light. For a man who regards his life as a certain special relationship to the world with which he entered into existence and which has developed during his life by the increase of love—for such a man to believe in his annihilation is the same as for a man who knows the external and visible laws of the world, to believe that his mother found him under a cabbage-leaf and that his body will one day suddenly fly away no one knows where and that nothing will remain of it.

## XXXI

*The life of those who die continues even in this world.*

THE superstition of death is made yet more apparent, I will not say from a different point of view, but in accord with the very essence of life as we know it. My friend and brother used to be alive as I am and now he has ceased to live like me. His life was in his consciousness and was subject to the conditions of his corporeal existence; consequently now that it cannot manifest itself in space and time he no longer exists for me. My brother was alive and I was in communion with him, but now he is no more and I cannot tell where he is.

‘Between him and us all links are sundered. He no longer exists for us, and we in our turn shall cease to exist for those who outlive us. What is this but death?’ So say men who do not understand life.

The cessation of external intercourse seems to them the most unanswerable proof of the reality of death. Yet the illusive nature of the conception of



death is revealed by nothing more clearly and evidently than by the cessation of the bodily existence of friends who were dear to us. My brother died, and what has happened? The manifestation of his relationship to the world which I could observe in time and space, has disappeared from my eyes and nothing is left.

‘Nothing is left,’ as a chrysalis that had not yet released its butterfly might say on seeing that a neighbouring cocoon had been left empty. And a cocoon (were it able to think and speak) would be justified in saying so because having lost its neighbour it would indeed be unable to have any further contact with it. But this is not so with man. My brother died, his cocoon is really empty. I do not see him in the form in which I used to see him, but his disappearance from my sight has not destroyed my relation to him. I have, as we usually express it, kept his memory.

His memory remains—not the memory of his hands, face, and eyes, but that of his spiritual image.

What is this memory—so simple and seemingly intelligible a word? The forms of crystals and animals disappear and there is no memory left among them. But I have the memory of my friend and brother. And this memory is the more vivid the more the life of my friend and brother conformed to the law of reason and the more it was made manifest in love. This memory is not merely a notion, but acts on me just as my brother’s life did during his earthly existence. This memory is the same invisible and immaterial atmosphere that surrounded him in life, and acted on me and on others during his physical existence even as it still acts on me after his death. This memory demands of me now, after his death, just what he demanded

of me when he was alive. Indeed, this memory becomes more obligatory for me after his death than it was during his life. That vital force which was in my brother, far from disappearing and diminishing, has only undergone a transformation, it has increased and acts on me more powerfully than before.

After his bodily death his vital force acts as strongly as before or more so, and acts as everything does that is truly alive. On what ground then—feeling this vital force just as I felt it during my brother's physical life (that is, as his relation to the world which explained to me my own relation to it)—can I affirm that my dead brother no longer possesses life? I can say that he has gone out of this lower relationship to the world in which he was as an animal and in which I still find myself—that is all. I can say that I do not see that centre of the new relationship to the world in which he now finds himself. But I cannot deny his life, for I feel its influence on myself. I saw in a mirror how a man was supporting me. The surface of the mirror has become dim, I no longer see how he supports me, but I feel with my whole being that he still does so in just the same way, and I therefore know that he exists.

But more than that, this life of my brother unseen by me not only acts upon me but penetrates me. His special living *self*, his relationship to the world, becomes my own relationship to the world. While establishing his new relationship to the world he, as it were, raises me to the level he has himself reached, and that next step becomes clearer to me—to my special *self*—because though hidden from my bodily eyes he yet draws me towards him.

Thus within me I am conscious of the life of my brother who has died a physical death, and so

I cannot doubt that he exists; and observing the action on the world of that life which has vanished from my eyes, I become still more firmly convinced of the existence of that life which has gone from before my eyes. The man has died, but his relationship to the world continues to act upon me not only as it did in his lifetime but with far greater force, and in proportion to its reasonableness and love this action increases and grows like all that lives, without ceasing and without any interruption.

Christ died very long ago, his bodily existence was brief and we have no clear conception of his bodily personality, but the strength of his reasonable and loving life, his relationship to the world—and no one else's—acts till now on millions of people who accept his relationship to the world and conform their life to it. What is it, then, that acts? What is this that before was connected with the bodily existence of Christ and now forms a continuation and extension of that life? We say that this is not Christ's life but its consequence. And having said those words which have no meaning, it seems to us that we have said something clearer and more definite than if we had said that this force is itself the living Christ. It is just what ants might say who had dug around an acorn that had sprouted and become an oak. The acorn has grown and has become an oak and pierces the earth with its roots, sheds twigs and new acorns, intercepts the light and the rain and changes everything that lives around it. 'This is not the life of the acorn,' the ants would say, 'but the consequence of its life which ended when we dragged it away and threw it into a hole.'

My brother died yesterday or a thousand years ago, and that same vital force which acted during his bodily existence continues to act yet more strongly in me and in hundreds, thousands, millions

of men, though the centre of this force of his temporary bodily existence visible to me has disappeared from my sight. What does this mean? I saw before me the light of burning grass. The grass burnt out but the light has only increased. I do not see the cause of this light, I do not know what is burning, but I can conclude that the same fire which burnt up the grass is now burning the distant forest, or something else that I cannot see. And such is the light that I not only see it now, but it alone guides me and gives me life. I live by that light. How then can I deny it? I may think that the force of this life now has a different centre invisible to me, but I cannot deny its existence, because I feel it and am moved to live by it. What this centre is like, what that life is in itself, I cannot know: I may guess, if I like guessing and am not afraid of going astray. But if I seek a reasonable understanding of life then I shall content myself with what is clear and certain and shall not wish to spoil what is clear and certain by adding obscure and arbitrary conjectures. It is enough for me to know that if all I live by has been composed of the lives of those who lived before me and have long since died, then every man who has accomplished the law of his life by subjecting his animal personality to reason and manifesting the power of love, has lived and does live in other men after the disappearance of his bodily existence, and in the light of that knowledge the absurd and terrible superstition of death can never again trouble me.

In the case of men who have left behind them a force which continues to act, we too can see why having subdued their personality to reason and devoted their lives to love, they never could and never did doubt the impossibility of life being destroyed.

In the life of such people we can also find the

basis of their belief in the permanence of life, and if we study our own lives closely we may find that basis in ourselves too. Christ said that he would live after the disappearance of the phantom of life. He said this because already then, during his bodily existence, he had entered into the true life which cannot cease. During his physical existence he already lived in the beams of light from that other centre of life to which he was advancing, and saw during his physical life how the beams of that light already lit up the men around him. The same is seen by every man who renounces his personal life and lives a life of reason and of love.

However narrow may be the sphere of a man's activity—be he a Christ, a Socrates, a good unknown self-sacrificing old man, a youth, or a woman—if he lives renouncing his personality for the good of others, he enters already here in this life into that new relationship to the world for which there is no death, and the establishment of which is for all men the one important business of this life.

A man who has placed his life in submission to the law of reason and in the manifestation of love, sees even in this life, on the one hand the beams of light from that new centre of life towards which he is going, and on the other hand the action which this light in passing through him produces on those around him. And this gives him a confident faith in the stability, immortality, and eternal growth of life. Belief in immortality is not a thing that can be taken from others, nor can a man persuade himself of it. Before this faith can exist there must be immortality, and for immortality to exist it is necessary to understand that one's life lies in that which is immortal. Only he can believe in the future life who has done his work in this life, and estab-

lished in this life that new relationship to the world, which exceeds the world's capacity to hold it.

## XXXII

*The superstition of death arises from man's confusing his different relationships to the world.*

YES, if we consider life in its true meaning it becomes difficult even to understand on what the strange superstition of death is based—just as on examining something that in the dark had seemed to be an apparition, it is impossible to recreate the same phantasmal fear.

The fear of losing that which alone exists is caused entirely by life presenting itself to man not merely in the particular relationship of his reasonable consciousness to the world (known to him though unseen) but also in two other relationships to the world, unknown to him but visible: that of his animal consciousness and that of his body. All that exists presents itself to man either as: (1) the relationship of his reasonable consciousness to the world, (2) the relationship of his animal consciousness to the world, or (3) the relationship to the world of the matter of which his body is composed. Not understanding that the relationship of his reasonable consciousness to the world is his only life, man imagines his life to exist also in the visible relationship to the world of his animal consciousness and the matter of which his body is composed, and he fears to lose the particular relationship of his reasonable consciousness to the world when the present relation to the world of his animal self and the matter composing it is disturbed in his person.

To such a man it seems that he originates from a movement of matter attaining the level of personal consciousness. It seems to him that this animal

consciousness is transformed into reasonable consciousness, that this becomes enfeebled later and again passes back into the animal, and that at last the animal consciousness weakens and returns to the inanimate matter from which it came. Looking at things in this way the relationship of his reasonable consciousness to the world seems to him something fortuitous, unnecessary, and perishable. In this view it appears that the relationship of the animal consciousness of man to the world is indestructible (the animal perpetuates itself in its species and the relation of matter to the world cannot in any way be destroyed and is eternal) but that the most precious thing of all, his reasonable consciousness, is not only not eternal but is merely a gleam of something unnecessary and superfluous.

And man feels that this cannot be true. And in this lies the fear of death. To save themselves from this fear, some people try to convince themselves that the animal consciousness is actually their reasonable consciousness, and that the perpetuity of animal man, that is to say of his species, his progeny, satisfies the demand for immortality which reasonable consciousness bears in itself. Others wish to assure themselves that life, never having existed before, suddenly appeared in a bodily form, vanished, and will rise in the flesh and live again. But for people who do not recognize life in the relation of the reasonable consciousness to the world it is impossible to believe either of these opinions. To them it is evident that the continuation of the human race does not satisfy the incessant demand of the particular *self* for permanence; it is also evident that the conception of a life beginning anew implies that of a cessation of life, and if life did not exist in the past and has not always existed, then it cannot exist afterwards.

For both these classes earthly life is a wave. Personality arises from dead matter, and from personality comes reasonable consciousness which is the crest of the wave. Having reached the crest, the wave (that is reasonable consciousness and the personality) sinks back to where it came from and ceases to exist. To either of these classes the life of man is his visible life. Man grows up, matures, and dies, and after death nothing can exist for him: what is left after him and of him, whether his posterity or even his works, cannot satisfy him. He pities himself, and fears the cessation of his life. He cannot believe that this life of his, which began here on earth in his body and ends here, will rise again. He knows that if he did not exist before and if he came out of nothing and dies, then he, his personal *self*, will not and cannot exist again. Man recognizes that he will not die, only when he recognizes that he was never born, but always has been, is, and will be. Man will believe in his immortality only when he understands that his life is not a wave but an eternal movement, which shows itself only as a wave in this life.

It seems to me that I shall die and my life will come to an end, and this thought torments and frightens me because I pity myself. But what will die? What do I pity? What am I myself from the most ordinary point of view? First of all I am flesh. What then? Am I afraid of losing that? Is this what I regret? It turns out not to be so, and that not a bit of the body, of matter, can ever be lost—not one particle of it. So that part of me is safe. There is nothing to fear there. It will all be safe. But no, they say, it is not that we regret. The regret is for myself, Leo or Iván. But then no one of us is now the person he was twenty years ago, and every day he is different. So which do I regret?



No, they say, it is not this that one is sorry for. I regret my consciousness, my *self*.

But then this consciousness of yours was not always the same, you have had several: a year ago it was a different one, ten years ago it was still more different, and earlier than that, as far back as you can remember, it was entirely different, and it always went on changing. How is it you are so particularly pleased by your present consciousness that you regret losing it? Had it been always the same it would be understandable, but the one thing it does is to change incessantly. You do not see and cannot find its beginning, and yet suddenly you want it never to come to an end and want the consciousness which is now in you to exist for ever. You have been moving as long as you can remember. You came into this world not knowing how, you only know that you came with this special *self* you now are; then you walked on and walked on till you came half-way and suddenly, half pleased and half afraid, you stop short and do not wish to budge or go any farther because you do not see what is beyond. You did not see the place from whence you came, yet you have come: you came in at the entrance and do not wish to go out by the exit.

Your whole life has been a progress through physical existence: you walked and hurried on, and now suddenly you feel regret that that is happening which has been happening all the time. You are frightened at the great change impending at your bodily death; but an equally great change took place at your birth and that did not result in anything bad for you—on the contrary the result has been so good that you do not now wish to part from it.

What can be frightening you? You say you regret

your *self*, with its present feelings and thoughts, its conception of the world, and your present relation to the world.

You fear to lose your relationship to the world. What is this relationship? In what does it consist?

If it consists in the way you eat, drink, reproduce yourself, build houses, clothe yourself, and treat other men and animals, all that is just the relationship that every man as a reasoning animal has with life, and this relationship cannot disappear: there have been, are, and will be, millions of such relationships and the species will be preserved as surely and certainly as each atom of matter. The preservation of the species is so strongly rooted in all animals, and is therefore so permanent, that there is no need to fear for it. If you are an animal you have nothing to fear, and if you are matter you are still more assured of being eternal.

But if you fear to lose that which is not animal, then you are afraid of losing your special rational relationship to the world—that with which you entered into this existence. But you know that it did not commence with your birth; it existed independently of the birth of your animal self and therefore cannot be dependent on whether you die.

### XXXIII

*The visible life is part of the infinite movement of life.*

My earthly life and that of all other men presents itself to me thus:

We, all living men, find ourselves here in a certain definite relation to the world and have a certain degree of love. At first it seems to us that our life begins with this relationship to the world, but observing ourselves and other people we see that this relation to the world, the degree of love each of

us has, did not begin with this life but has been brought by us into life from a past hidden from us by our physical birth. Besides this we see that the whole course of our life here is nothing but a constant increase and strengthening of our love, which never ceases but is only concealed from our sight by physical death.

My visible life appears to me like a segment of a cone the apex and base of which are hidden from my mental sight. The narrowest part of the cone is my relation to the world when I first became conscious of myself, the widest part is the highest relationship to life to which I have now attained. The beginning of this cone—its apex—is hidden from me in time by my birth, the continuation of the cone is hidden from me by the future, equally unseen both during my physical existence and at my physical death. I see neither the apex of the cone nor its base, but from the part of it which my visible life traverses, the part I remember, I certainly recognize its nature. At first it seems to me that this segment of the cone is my whole life, but in proportion as my true life progresses I see on the one hand that what forms the basis of my life is to be found behind it, beyond its limits: as I go on living I become more vividly and clearly conscious of my connexion with the unseen past; on the other hand I see how that basis rests on a future unseen by me, I feel more clearly and vividly my connexion with the future and conclude that my visible earthly life is but a small part of my whole life, undoubtedly continuing beyond both ends of it, before my birth and after my death, but hidden from my present consciousness. And so the cessation of visible life after my physical death cannot deprive me of the assurance of the existence of life before birth and after death, any more than did its invisibility before

my birth. I bring with me into life a certain natural faculty of love to the world outside me; my physical existence—brief or prolonged—passes in augmenting this love brought by me into life, and so I indubitably conclude that I lived before my birth and shall live both after this present moment in which I am now reflecting, and after every other moment before and after my physical death. Looking outside myself at the physical beginnings and endings of the existence of other men (and of beings in general) I see that one life seems to be longer and another shorter, one appears sooner and is visible to me longer, another appears later and is very soon concealed from me; but in them all I see the manifestation of one and the same law of all true life—an augmentation of love—like a broadening of the beams of life. Sooner or later a curtain is let down hiding from me the course of man's temporal life—the life of all men is the same and like all life has neither beginning nor end. And that a man has lived a longer or shorter time in the conditions of existence visible to me can make no difference to his true life. That one man passed more slowly and another more quickly across the field of my vision, gives me no right to attribute more of real life to the one than to the other. I know without doubt that if I see a man passing my window—whether quickly or slowly—this man existed before I saw him and will still exist after he has passed beyond my sight.

But why do some pass quickly and others slowly? Why does a withered old man, morally ossified and (as it seems to us) incapable of fulfilling the law of life which is the growth of love—why does this old man live on, while a child, a youth, a girl, a man in all the vigour of his mental activity, dies—leaving the conditions of this physical life when it seems to

us he was only beginning to establish in himself a regular relationship to life?

One may understand the death of Pascal<sup>1</sup> and Gógol,<sup>2</sup> but what of Chénier,<sup>3</sup> Lérmontov,<sup>4</sup> and thousands of others whose intrinsic workings had, it seems to us, only just begun and could so well have been continued here?

But that is only how it seems to us. None of us knows anything about the principles of life others have brought into the world, nor of the movement of life that has taken place in them, or the hindrances to the movement of life that may exist in any one man, and above all we know nothing of those other conditions of life (invisible to us but possible) into which a man's life may enter in another existence.

As we watch a blacksmith at work it seems to us that a horseshoe is almost ready and that he has only to strike it once or twice more, but he breaks it up and throws it into the fire, knowing that it was not thoroughly heated.

We cannot tell whether the work of true life is being accomplished in a man or not. We know that only about ourselves. It seems to us that a man dies when it was unnecessary for him to do so, but that cannot be. A man dies only when it is necessary for his welfare, just as he grows and

<sup>1</sup> Tolstóy highly esteemed Pascal, and wrote an essay about him.—A. M.

<sup>2</sup> He also thought very highly of Gógol, and considered that Gógol's later, religious, writings were not duly appreciated.—A. M.

<sup>3</sup> Chénier was executed in 1794 at the age of thirty-two, during the Reign of Terror, having shown great promise of doing even better work than he had already accomplished.—A. M.

<sup>4</sup> Lérmontov—who shares with Púshkin the highest place among Russian poets—was killed in a duel in 1841 at the age of twenty-six, just when he was showing signs of reaching a profounder outlook on life.—A. M.

reaches man's estate only when that is needed for his good.

Indeed, if by life we mean life itself and not its shadow, if true life is the foundation of everything, then the foundation cannot depend on what it produces—the cause cannot proceed from its effect. The course of true life cannot be impaired by a change in its manifestation. The movement of life in a man in this world—begun but not completed—cannot be stopped because of an abscess, or because of some microbe, or because of a pistol-shot.

A man dies only because the good of his true life cannot increase further in this world, and not because his lungs hurt or because he has cancer or because he has been shot at or had a bomb thrown at him. We usually imagine that it is natural to live a physical life and unnatural to perish by fire, water, cold, lightning, disease, pistol-shot, or bomb; but we need only think seriously, observing men's lives from aside, to see that on the contrary, to live a physical life amid all these fatal conditions, among the innumerable microbes diffused everywhere (and most of them deadly) is quite unnatural. It is natural that we should die. And so physical life amid these deadly conditions is a most unnatural thing from a material point of view. If we live, it is not due to the fact that we take care of ourselves, but because the work of life, which subordinates all those conditions to itself, is being accomplished in us. We are alive not because we safeguard ourselves, but because we are doing life's work. When the work of life is done, nothing can any longer stop the unceasing destruction of man's physical life. That destruction is accomplished, and we then regard one of the proximate causes of physical death, which always surround man, as the sole cause of his death.

Our true life exists, it is the only thing we know, and from it alone do we know the animal life, and so if even the semblance of true life is subject to invariable laws how can the life which produces that semblance fail to be subject to law?

We are troubled because we do not see the causes and the results of our true life in the way we see the causes and results of external phenomena: we do not know why one man enters life bringing a *self* endowed with such and such characteristics, while another comes bringing other characteristics—why the life of the one breaks down while that of the other continues. We ask ourselves: what were the causes, before my birth, which led to my being born to be what I am? And what will be the result after my death of my having lived in this way or that? And we are distressed at not receiving replies to these questions.

But to regret that I cannot now know what occurred before I was born and what will happen after my death, is as if I regretted that I cannot see beyond the reach of my sight. If I could see what is beyond the reach of my eyes I should be unable to see what is within the field of their vision, but for me, for the good of my animal self, it is most necessary to see what is around me.

And it is the same with my reason, by means of which I understand. If I could perceive what is beyond the limits of my reason I should not be able to perceive what is within its sphere. But for the welfare of my true life it is above all necessary that I should know to what I ought to submit my animal individuality here and now in order to obtain the welfare of life.

And reason shows me this; it shows me in this life the only path towards the welfare that never ends.

It shows without a doubt that this life did not

begin at birth, but has been and always is: it shows that the welfare of life grows and increases here, extending to limits which can no longer contain it, and only then passes into another existence beyond the conditions which hinder its growth.

Reason places man on that one path of life which, like a cone-shaped tunnel that widens out between the walls enclosing it on all sides, reveals to him in the distance an undoubted eternity of life and of its welfare.

## XXXIV

*The inexplicability of the sufferings of earthly existence proves to man more convincingly than anything else that his life is not the life of the personality which begins at birth and ends at death.*

BUT even if man could avoid fearing death and thinking of it, the terrible aimless sufferings, unjustified and unavoidable, that he has to endure would alone suffice to destroy any reasonable meaning he might attribute to life.

I am engaged on good work, unquestionably useful for others, and suddenly a disease seizes me, interrupts my work, and exhausts and torments me without any sense or reason. A bolt has grown rusty in a rail and it must needs drop out the very day that a good woman, a mother, is travelling in a certain carriage, and her children are crushed before her eyes. The very place where Lisbon or Vérny<sup>1</sup> stands caves in from an earthquake and swallows people up alive, and innocent people

<sup>1</sup> In the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755 over 50,000 people were swallowed up. Vérny in Asiatic Russia, near the borders of China, has frequently suffered from earthquakes. A particularly severe one occurred not long before *On Life* was written, a peculiarity of which was that the earth opened wide, swallowing all that was within range.—A. M.



perish with horrible sufferings. What sense is there in that? And why are there those thousands of other meaningless and terrible sufferings which stagger mankind?

The rational explanations that are produced explain nothing. They always evade the essence of the problem and only make its insolubility yet more apparent. I have fallen ill because some microbes or other have established themselves in me; the children were crushed before their mother's eyes because of some effect which dampness has on iron; Vérny caved in because of some geological laws. But the question is why was it that just these particular people underwent these horrible sufferings, and how I am to save myself from similar ones?

To this there is no reply. On the contrary, reason plainly shows me that there are and can be no laws by which one man is involved in these happenings and another man is not, that there are an immense number of such occurrences, and that therefore no matter what I do my life is exposed every instant to innumerable possibilities of most terrible suffering.

If only people made the deductions that inevitably follow from their conception of life, those who understand their life as being their individual existence would not consent to live for a moment. No single workman would stay with a master who, when hiring him, reserved the right to roast him alive on a slow fire any time that it occurred to him to do so, or to flay him alive or pluck out his nerves—in a word, to practise on him all the horrors which we see perpetrated before our eyes without explanation or reason. If men really understood life in the way they say they do, not one would continue to live in the world, if only from fear of all the tormenting and quite unexplained sufferings

they see around them and which may at any moment befall them.

Yet though they know various easy means of killing themselves, of leaving this life so full of cruel and insensate sufferings, men live on: they complain, they bewail their sufferings, but continue to live.

One cannot say that this occurs because there is more pleasure than suffering in life, for in the first place simple reflection—quite apart from any philosophic examination of life—clearly shows that all earthly life is a succession of sufferings which are far from being compensated for by pleasures; and in the second place we all know of ourselves and from others that men in positions offering nothing but a succession of increasing sufferings with no possibility of alleviation till death, still do not kill themselves but cling to life.

There is only one explanation of this strange contradiction: it is that all men in the depth of their souls know that all suffering is necessary and indispensable for their life's good, and only for that reason do they continue to live, foreseeing them and enduring them. They resent these sufferings because with their false view of life which demands the welfare of their personal life only, all that infringes that welfare without leading to any obvious good must appear to them as something unintelligible and therefore shocking.

And men are horrified at these sufferings and are astonished at them as at something quite unexpected and incomprehensible. Yet every man has grown up by suffering; his whole life is a series of sufferings he experiences or inflicts on other beings; and it would seem that he ought to become used to suffering and not be afraid of it or ask himself why and for what, he has to endure it. Every man, if

only he thinks, will see that all his pleasures are purchased at the price of the suffering of other beings; that all his sufferings are necessary for his pleasures; that suffering and pleasure are two contrasted conditions evoked one by the other and indispensable to one another. Then what is the meaning of the question—Why, and for what, are these sufferings?—which every reasonable man asks himself? Why does a man, knowing that suffering and pleasure are bound up together, ask himself: Why is there suffering, and what for? and not: Why are there pleasures, and what for?

The whole activity of an animal, and of man as an animal, is an uninterrupted sequence of sufferings. The whole activity of an animal, and of man as an animal, is evoked only by suffering. Suffering is a painful sensation calling forth activity which removes that painful feeling and produces a condition of pleasure. And the life of an animal, and of man as an animal, instead of being impaired by suffering is only accomplished in consequence of suffering. Suffering is therefore that which compels life to go forward, and consequently it is necessary. Then what does man mean when he asks: Why does suffering exist, and to what end?

Animals do not ask that.

When a hungry perch torments a minnow, or a spider torments a fly, or a wolf a sheep, they know that what they are doing must be done; and so when in turn the perch, the spider, or the wolf, are subjected to similar tortures by something stronger than themselves, they—fleeing, defending themselves, or wrenching themselves away—know that they are still doing what must be done and therefore feel no doubt but that what is happening to them is what ought to happen. But a man occupied solely in healing the stumps of his legs, which have

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been torn off in a battle in which he tore off other men's legs; or a man solely occupied in passing his term of solitary confinement in the best possible manner, after having himself put others there directly or indirectly; or a man solely occupied in beating off or escaping from wolves that rend him, after having himself cut up and devoured thousands of animals—such a man cannot think that what is happening to him is just what ought to happen. He cannot admit that what is happening to him is what ought to happen, and that he has fallen into these sufferings because he has not himself done all he should have done. Not having done all he should have done, it seems to him that what is happening to him ought not to happen.

But what should a man who is being rent by wolves do except run away and defend himself from them? He ought to do what is suitable for him to do as a reasonable being—avow the sin which caused the suffering, repent of it, and recognize the truth.

An animal suffers only in the present, and so it is fully satisfied by the activity called forth by its suffering and directed to itself in the present. But man suffers not only in the present but also in the past and the future, and so the activity called forth by his suffering, if directed only to the present of the animal man, cannot satisfy him. Only activity directed to the cause and the consequences of the suffering, both to the past and to the future, satisfies a suffering man.

An animal is shut up and tears its way out of the cage, or it has a broken leg and licks the sore place, or it is being bitten by another animal and tries to escape from it. The law of its life is infringed by an external cause and it directs its activity to re-establishing what ought to be. But suppose a man—I myself or a friend of mine—is in prison, or my

friend or I have lost a leg in battle, or wolves are rending me; I shall not be satisfied by an activity directed simply to escaping from prison, to healing my leg, or defending myself from the wolves, because the imprisonment, the injury to my leg, and the attacks of the wolves, constitute only a small part of my suffering. I see the causes of my suffering in the past, in my own errors and in those of other men, and if my activity is not directed to the cause of the suffering—that is to say, to my errors, and if I do not try to deliver myself from them, I am not doing what I ought to do, and therefore the suffering appears to me to be a thing that ought not to be and it increases in frightful proportions, not only in reality but also in imagination, and renders life intolerable.

An animal suffers because of the transgression of the law of animal life, which transgression manifests itself by the consciousness of pain, and the activity called forth by that transgression is directed to the removal of the pain. For a reasonable consciousness the cause of suffering lies in an infringement of the law of its life: this infringement manifests itself by a consciousness of error, of sin, and the activity called forth by this transgression of the law is directed to the removal of the error, the sin. And just as the suffering of the animal calls forth an activity which is directed to the alleviation of the pain, and owing to this activity the suffering ceases to be a torment, so too the suffering of the reasonable being calls forth an activity directed towards the error, and this activity causes the suffering to cease to be a torment.

The questions: Why? To what purpose?—arising in a man's mind when he experiences or imagines suffering, only show that he has not recognized the activity that ought to be aroused in him by suffer-

ing and which releases suffering from its character of torment. Indeed for a man who regards his animal existence as his life, there cannot be this activity which liberates him from suffering, and the more narrowly he understands his life the less of such activity can there be.

When a man who regards his life as being his individual existence finds the causes of his personal suffering in his own errors, when he understands that he has fallen ill because he has eaten something harmful, or has been beaten because he himself sought a quarrel, or that he is hungry and naked because he would not work—when he knows that he is suffering because he has done what he ought not to have done, and directs his activity to the elimination of his faults in order that he may not make the same mistake in future—he will not revolt against the suffering but will bear it lightly and often gladly. But when such a man has to bear suffering which exceeds the limits within which he can perceive a connexion between the suffering and the fault—as when he suffers from causes which have always been outside his personal activity, or when the consequences of his sufferings cannot be of any use to himself or to any other individual, it seems to him that something is happening to him which ought not to happen, and he asks himself: Why? For what purpose?—and finding no object towards which to direct his activity, he revolts against the suffering and it becomes a terrible torture. But the greater part of the sufferings of men are precisely of the kind where the causes or consequences (and sometimes both) are hidden from him in space and time: hereditary diseases, unfortunate accidents, famines, wrecks, fires, earthquakes, and the like . . . ending in death.

The answer which tells us that such things are

necessary to teach our descendants that they should not give way to their passions (which may cause diseases to be transmitted to their posterity), or that they should build better trains, or be more prudent with fire—is not satisfactory. I cannot recognize the meaning of my life to be that I must serve as an illustration for others of the necessity of taking precautions. My life is my life with its striving for what is good, and I cannot regard it as an illustration for other lives. These explanations have only a conversational use and do not mitigate my horror in face of the senselessness of the sufferings that menace me and make life impossible.

But even were it possible in some way to understand that as my errors cause other people to suffer, so I by my sufferings pay for the faults of others; if it were possible to understand, even very remotely, that all suffering indicates an error which must be rectified by men in this life, there are still an enormous number of sufferings that remain quite unexplained: a man alone in a forest is torn to pieces by wolves; a man is drowned, frozen, or burnt to death in solitude, or simply falls ill and dies and no one ever knows how he suffered—and there are thousands of such cases. To whom can this be of any sort of use?

For a man who understands his life as an animal existence there is no explanation and can be none, since for such a man the connexion between suffering and error exists only in things he can see, and in sufferings immediately before death this connexion quite escapes his mental vision.

Man has two choices: either—not acknowledging a connexion between them and his life—to continue to accept the majority of the sufferings he experiences as tortures that have no meaning, or to recognize that his errors and the actions he performs

in consequence of them—his sins, whatever they may be—are the cause of his sufferings, whatever they may be, and that these are a deliverance from and a redemption of his own sins and those of other men.

Only these two relations to suffering are possible: the one is to reject it as something that ought not to be, because one does not see its external significance; and the other is to realize its intrinsic meaning for the true life, and to accept it gladly as the very thing that ought to be. The first arises from regarding as welfare only the welfare of man's separate individual life; the other arises from recognizing as welfare the welfare of man's whole past and future in indissoluble union with the welfare of other men and all beings. With the first view there is no explanation whatever of suffering and it does not evoke any activity other than an ever-increasing despair and exasperation that can never be pacified. With the second view the suffering evokes the activity which constitutes the movement of true life—a consciousness of sin, liberation from error, and submission to the law of reason.

Man is involuntarily compelled—if not by reason then by the torture of suffering—to recognize that his life is not confined to his personality, that personality is merely the visible portion of his whole life, that the external connexion between cause and effect which his individuality reveals does not coincide with the internal connexion of cause and effect which his reasonable consciousness always makes known to him.

The connexion between error and suffering, visible to the animal only in conditions of space and time, is always clear to man's consciousness outside these conditions. Suffering, of whatever kind, is always recognized by man as a consequence of his



sin, whatever it may be, and he recognizes repentance for sin as a liberation from suffering and an attainment of welfare.

Man's whole life from the first days of childhood consists only in that—in becoming conscious of sin through suffering and in liberating himself from error. I know that I entered this life with a certain knowledge of truth, and that the more error there was in me the more suffering there was for myself and for others. The more I liberated myself from error the less suffering there was for me and for others and the more did I attain to what was good. And therefore I know that the greater the knowledge of truth I carry away from this world—even if given me by my death-bed sufferings—the more good shall I obtain.

Only that man experiences torment through suffering who has separated himself from the life of the world and does not see the sins by which he has brought suffering upon himself and others but considers himself guiltless, and therefore revolts against the sufferings which he endures for the sins of the world.

And strange to say, the very thing that is manifest to reason mentally, is also confirmed by the one true activity of life—love. Reason says that a man who acknowledges the connexion between his sins and sufferings and those of the world delivers himself from the torture of suffering; and love confirms this in fact.

Half of each man's life passes in sufferings which he not only does not recognize as torments and does not notice, but which he even considers to be good; and this is only because he endures them as a consequence of errors and as a means of lightening the sufferings of beings he loves. So that the less he has of love the more a man feels the torments of suffer-

ing, and the more there is of love the less the torments of suffering. But a quite reasonable life of which the whole activity is manifested in love, excludes the possibility of any suffering. The torment of suffering is nothing else than the pain men experience when they try to break that chain of love—connecting them with their ancestors, their posterity, and their contemporaries—which unites the life of man to the life of the world.

## XXXV

*Physical suffering forms an indispensable condition of the life and welfare of man.*

‘But it hurts—hurts physically. What is this pain for?’ people ask.

‘Because not only do we need it but we could not live unless we experienced pain,’ he would reply who has made things so that we suffer, and arranged it so that we are as little hurt as possible, and has made the good from this ‘pain’ as great as possible.

Who does not know that our very first sensation of pain is the first and chief means of preserving our body and prolonging our animal life, and that were it not for this we should all, as children, have burnt ourselves, or cut ourselves up completely, for amusement. Physical pain preserves our animal individuality. And as long as pain serves to preserve the individuality (as it does with a child) it cannot be the terrifying torture we experience when our reasonable consciousness is in its full strength and we struggle against pain, regarding it as something that ought not to be. With the animal and in the child pain is clearly defined and very slight, never attaining that degree of torment it reaches in a being endowed with reasonable

consciousness. We sometimes see a child cry as pitifully over a fleabite as over pain that accompanies the destruction of one of its internal organs, and the pain of an irrational being leaves no trace in its memory. If we try to remember our childish pains, we see that not only have we no recollection of them, but we are unable even to reproduce them in imagination. The impression made on us by the sight of the sufferings of children and animals is more our own suffering than theirs. The outward expression of the suffering of unreasoning beings is immeasurably greater than the suffering itself, and so it evokes our compassion to an exaggerated extent, as can be seen in the case of diseases of the brain, fevers, typhus, and various forms of agony.

At the period of life when reasonable consciousness has not yet been awakened and the pain serves only to preserve the individuality, it is not agonizing, but when the reasonable consciousness in man can operate, pain is a means of subduing the animal personality to reason, and in proportion as this consciousness is awakened the pain becomes ever less and less tormenting.

Essentially it is only when we are in full possession of reasonable consciousness that we are able to speak of suffering, because it is only from that state that life commences and with it those conditions which we call suffering. In this state the sensation of pain can be extended to the greatest, or contracted to the smallest, proportions. Indeed who does not know, without studying physiology, that sensitiveness has its limits and that when pain reaches a certain degree, either sensation ceases and gives place to a swoon, insensibility, or delirium, or death ensues. The increase of pain is therefore a very definite quantity which cannot exceed certain limits. But the sensation of pain can be increased to infinity

by our relation to it, and in the same way can be reduced to infinitely small proportions.

Everyone knows how a man resigning himself to pain and recognizing it as what ought to be, is able to endure it so that he ceases to feel it and sometimes even experiences joy in enduring it. Not to speak of the martyrs, or of John Huss who sang at the stake, quite ordinary people, merely to show their manhood, will endure operations which are considered very painful without flinching or uttering a cry. There is a limit to the increase of pain, but there is no limit to the diminution of our perception of it.

The torments of pain are really terrible for those who have set their life in their physical existence. And how can it fail to be terrible when the force of reason (given to man for the suppression of the agony of suffering) is directed only to increasing it?

In Plato there is a myth about God having at first assigned a term of seventy years for the life of man, but afterwards, seeing that the condition of men became worse in consequence, changed it to what it is now and arranged that men should not know when they would die. Similarly the established order of things might be correctly expressed by a myth telling that man was first created with no feeling of pain, but afterwards for his own good, matters were arranged as they now are.

If the gods had created men without the feeling of pain, men would soon have begun to ask for it: without the pains of childbirth women would give birth to children under such conditions that few infants would survive, children and young people would destroy their bodies, and grown men would never know the errors of those who lived before them or who are living now, nor—most important of all—would they know their own errors: they

would not know what they ought to do in this life, their activity would have no rational aim, they would never be able to reconcile themselves to the idea of physical death, and they would have to forgo love.

For a man who understands his life as the subjection of his individuality to the law of reason, pain is not only not an evil but is an indispensable condition both of his animal and his rational life. If there were no pain, the animal individuality would have no indication of its transgression of its law, if reasonable consciousness experienced no suffering, man would not know the truth and would never learn the law of his being.

But—people will say of this—you are speaking merely of your own sufferings; but how can you deny those of others? The sight of their sufferings is the most tormenting pain of all—these people will say, not quite sincerely.

The sufferings of others? But the sufferings of others—that is to say, what you call sufferings—have always gone on and are still going on. The whole world of men and animals suffers and has always done so. Have we really only just heard of this? Wounds, mutilations, hunger, cold, disease, all sorts of unfortunate accidents, and above all child-bearing, without which none of us has ever come into the world—all these are necessary conditions of existence. It is just to this—to aiding and diminishing the suffering of others—that the true activity of life is directed, and that supplies the material for man's reasonable life. The sole business of human life is to understand the sufferings of individuals and the causes of human errors and to exert oneself to reduce them. That is why I am a man—a person—that I may understand the sufferings of other people; and for this I am

endowed with reasonable consciousness, that I may see in the suffering of each separate individual the common cause of suffering, namely error, and may destroy it in myself and in others. How can the material for his work be the cause of suffering to a workman? It is as though a ploughman said that unploughed land caused him to suffer. Unploughed land can be a source of suffering only to him who wants to see it ploughed but does not consider the ploughing of it to be his business in life. Immediate activity directed to the loving service of those who suffer and to the destruction of the common causes of suffering—namely, errors—is the one joyous task awaiting man and yielding him the inalienable welfare of which his life consists.

There is only one thing that causes man to suffer, and it is what compels him whether he will or no to devote himself to the life in which alone his welfare lies.

That suffering is consciousness of a contradiction between his own sinfulness and that of the whole world, and the obligation (not merely the possibility) of the fulfilment—not by someone else but by himself—of the whole truth, in his life and in that of the whole world. To allay this suffering is impossible either by taking part in the sins of the world and not seeing his own, or even less by ceasing to believe in the possibility and necessity of practising the whole truth in his own life and in that of the world, and doing it personally and not through others. The first merely increases the sufferings of man; the second deprives him of strength to live. This suffering can only be allayed by the activity of true life which puts an end to the disproportion between his personal life and the aim recognized by man. Whether he will or no, man must recognize that his life is not limited by his individuality from birth

till death; he must realize that the aim recognized by him is attainable, and that in striving towards it—in a greater and greater consciousness of his culpability and a greater and greater realization of the whole truth, both in his own life and in that of the world—the work of his life, which is inseparable from the life of the whole world, has always consisted, does consist, and always will consist.

Whether he wishes it or no, man is driven—if not by reasonable consciousness then by the suffering resulting from his errors as to the meaning of life—on to the one true path of life where neither obstacles nor evil exist, but only an ever-increasing welfare which nothing can violate and which never began and cannot end.

### *Conclusion*

MAN's life is a striving towards the good, and that towards which he strives is given him.

Evil in the form of death and suffering is visible to man only when he takes the law of his physical animal existence to be the law of his life.

Only when, being man, he descends to the level of an animal, does he see death and suffering. Death and sufferings, like bogies, then hoot at him from all sides and goad him into taking the one available road of human life subject to his law of reason and expressing itself in love. Death and suffering are only man's infringement of the law of his life. For a man living according to this law there is neither death nor suffering.

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' (Matt. xi. 28-30.)

The life of man is a striving towards what is good, what he strives for is given him: the life that cannot be death, and the good that cannot be evil.

### *Appendix I*

IT is usually said: We study life not from our own consciousness of it but from observation. But this is the same as saying: We observe objects not with our eyes but from outside ourselves.

We see objects outside ourselves because we see them with our eyes and we know life outside ourselves only because we know it in ourselves. We see objects only as they appear in our eyes and we define life outside us only as we know it in ourselves. We know the life in ourselves as a striving for what is good, and so unless we define life as a striving for the good it is impossible for us either to see life or to make observations upon it.

The first and chief act of our cognition of living beings is that we include many different objects in the conception of a single being and can distinguish that living being from all others. We can only do these two things by virtue of the definition of life of which we are all conscious—as a striving after good for oneself as a being distinct from all the rest of the world.

We recognize that a man on a horse is neither many beings nor one being not because we observe all the parts which form the man and the horse, but because neither in the head nor in the legs nor in the other parts of the man and the horse do we see such a separate striving for welfare as we are conscious of in ourselves. We know that the man and the horse are not one being but two because we recognize in them two distinct strivings after welfare, whereas in ourself we know but one.



By that alone do we know that there is life in the combination of horseman and horse and that there is life in a herd of horses and in a flock of birds, in the insects and trees and grass.

If we did not know that the horse desires welfare for himself and that man also desires welfare for himself, that each separate horse in the herd desires the same and that it is also the case with every bird, every insect, every tree, and every plant; we should not see their individuality and not seeing that we should never understand any living being: a regiment of cavalry, a herd of horses, a flock of birds, the insects, and the plants, would all be like the waves of the sea, and the whole world would merge for us into one indistinguishable movement in which we should be unable to discern life.

If I know that the horse, and the dog, and the tick that imbeds itself in the dog, are living creatures, and if I am able to observe them, it is only because the horse, the dog, and the tick, each has its individual aim for its own welfare. And I know this because I know myself as a being striving towards welfare.

It is this striving towards welfare that is the basis of all knowledge of life. Without recognizing as life this striving towards welfare of which each man is conscious, and that it is the essential sign of life, no study or observation of life is possible. So observation begins when life is already known, and observation, which only bears upon the manifestations of life, can never (as false science assumes) define life itself.

Men do not acknowledge the definition of life as a striving towards welfare which they find in their consciousness, but they grant the possibility of recognizing this striving in the tick, and on the basis of this suppositious and quite unfounded knowledge

of the welfare towards which the tick is striving, they make observations and deductions on the essence of life itself.

All my conceptions of external life are based on the consciousness of my striving towards what is good. That is why I can only recognize in what the welfare and the life of other beings consists after I have learnt in what my own welfare and life consists. Without knowing my own life I can never know the welfare and the life of other beings.

Observations of other creatures, striving after their own aims that are unknown to me and which show a similarity to the good towards which I know that I strive, cannot explain anything to me, but can assuredly conceal from me my true knowledge of life.

To study the life of other beings without having a definition of my own life, is the same as describing a circumference without having a centre for it. Only after having established a fixed point as the centre can one describe a circumference, and whatever figures we draw, without a centre there will be no circumference.

### *Appendix II*

FALSE science perverts the conception of life by supposing itself to be studying life when it is studying merely the phenomena that accompany it; and the longer it studies these phenomena the farther does it diverge from the conception of life it wishes to study.

First mammals are studied, then other vertebrates, fish, plants, corals, cells, microscopic organisms and so on, till the distinction between animate and inanimate, between organic and inorganic, and between the limits of one organism and another, is lost. This is carried on till they reach the point at which the most important subject of investigation

and observation appears to be that which cannot be observed. The secret of life and the explanation of everything appears to lie in bacilli and animalculæ surmised rather than seen, discovered to-day and forgotten to-morrow. The explanation of everything is supposed to lie in those organisms which are contained in microscopic creatures, and again in those which are contained in them, and so on *ad infinitum*, as though the infinite divisibility of the little was not an infinity as much as the infinity of the great. The mystery will be revealed when the whole infinity of the little has been completely investigated—that is to say, never. And men do not see that by supposing the solution to be in the infinitely little, they indubitably prove that the question has been wrongly put.

And this last phase of madness—which clearly shows how completely the investigation has lost its meaning—is regarded as a triumph of science: the last stage of blindness is regarded as the highest degree of vision. Men have gone up a blind alley, by so doing plainly exposing the falsity of the path they have followed, and thereupon their ecstasy knows no bounds: ‘Increase the power of the microscopes a little and we shall understand the transition from the inorganic to the organic, and from the organic to the psychical, and the whole mystery of life will be plain to us.’

Studying shadows instead of objects, men have quite forgotten the object whose shadow they are studying, and engrossing themselves more and more with the shadow, have reached complete darkness and rejoice that the shadow is so dense.

The meaning of life is shown in man’s consciousness as a striving towards the good. The elucidation of this good and its more and more exact definition forms the chief aim and task of the life of all

humanity; and now, because this task is difficult, because it is not play but work, men decide that the definition of this good cannot be found where it lies—that is, in man's rational consciousness—and that therefore it must be sought everywhere except where indications of it exist.

It is as if a man having received a note giving precise directions as to what he needs, and being unable to read it, were to throw away the note and ask everybody he meets to tell him what he wants. Men seek everywhere for the definition of life that is written in indelible characters on the soul of man—seek it everywhere except in the consciousness of man himself. This is the more strange because all humanity represented by its wisest spokesmen, since the time of the Greek aphorism 'Know thyself', has always said the very opposite. All the religious doctrines are nothing but definitions of life as a striving towards the real, not the delusive, good accessible to man.

### *Appendix III*

MAN hears the voice of reason more and more clearly, he hearkens to that voice more and more often, and the time is coming and has now come when this voice will prevail over that which calls him to individual welfare and to a duty that is false. It becomes more and more evident, on the one hand, that personal life with its lures cannot give welfare, and on the other hand, that the observance of duties prescribed by man is merely a deceit which deprives him of the possibility of paying the one debt he owes to the reasonable and beneficent source from whence he came. That ancient deception which demands faith in what has no reasonable explanation, is already worn out and we can no longer return to it.

Men used to say: 'Do not reflect, but believe in the duty we prescribe. Reason will deceive you. Faith alone will reveal to you the true good of life.' And man tried to believe and believed; but intercourse with other men showed him that they believed something quite different and affirmed that their belief yielded greater good. It became inevitable to decide the question which of the many faiths to believe in, and this can only be decided by reason.

Man always understands everything through his reason and not through faith. It was once possible to deceive him by asserting that he knows only through faith and not through reason, but as soon as he knows two faiths and sees men who profess another faith in the same way that he professes his own, he is inevitably obliged to decide the matter by reason. A Buddhist who has become acquainted with Mohammedanism, if he remains a Buddhist will be so no longer by faith but by reason. As soon as another faith is presented to him and the question arises whether he should reject his own or the one proposed to him, that question has inevitably to be decided by reason. And if having become acquainted with Mohammedanism he remains a Buddhist, his former blind faith in Buddha must be replaced by one based on rational grounds.

In our time the attempts made to infuse spirituality into man through faith apart from reason, are like attempts to feed a man otherwise than through his mouth.

Intercourse among men has shown them this basis of knowledge common to them all, and they can no longer return to the former delusions: the time is at hand and has already come when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God and having heard it shall live.

To stifle that voice is impossible, because it is not the voice of some one person but of the whole rational consciousness of humanity which makes itself heard in the best representatives of humanity, in each separate man, and now even in the majority of men.

1887.

## RELIGION AND MORALITY<sup>1</sup>

YOU ask me: (1) What I understand by the word *religion*, and, (2) Is it possible to have a morality independent of *religion* in the sense in which I understand that word?

I will do my best to answer these most important and excellently-put questions.

Three different meanings are commonly given to the word *religion*.

The first is, that religion is a special and true revelation given by God to man, and is a worship of God in accord with that revelation. This meaning is given to religion by people who believe in one or other of the existing religions and who consequently consider *that* particular religion to be the only true one.

The second meaning is, that religion is a collection of certain superstitious beliefs, as well as a superstitious form of worship accordant with such beliefs. This is the meaning given to religion by unbelievers in general, or by men who do not accept the particular religion they are defining.

The third meaning is, that religion is a collection of propositions and laws devised by wise men and needed to console the common people, to restrain their passions, and to make the masses manageable. This meaning is given to religion by those who are indifferent to religion as religion but consider it a useful instrument for Governments.

Religion according to the first definition is a sure and certain truth which it is desirable and even necessary for human welfare to promulgate by all possible means.

<sup>1</sup> A reply to questions put to Tolstóy by a German Ethical Society.

According to the second definition, religion is a collection of superstitions from which it is desirable and even necessary for human welfare that man should be emancipated by all possible means.

According to the third definition, religion is a certain useful appliance, not necessary for men of high culture but indispensable for the consolation and control of the common people, and which must therefore be maintained.

The first is like the definition a man might give of music, who said that music is a particular tune—the one he knows best and is fondest of,—and that it ought to be taught to as many people as possible.

The second is like a definition given by a man who does not understand and consequently dislikes music, and who says that music is the production of sounds with one's throat or mouth, or by applying one's hands to certain instruments, and that it is a useless and even harmful occupation from which people ought to be weaned as quickly as possible.

The third is like the definition of music by a man who says it is a thing useful for the purpose of teaching dancing, and also for marching, and that it should be maintained for those purposes.

The diversity and incompleteness of all these definitions arise from the fact that they fail to grasp the essential character of music, and only define some of its traits from the definer's point of view. The same is true of the three definitions given of religion.

According to the first of them religion is something in which the definer rightly believes.

According to the second, it is something in which, according to the definer's observation, other people mistakenly believe.

According to the third, it is something the definer thinks it desirable to get other people to believe in.



In all three cases the thing defined is not the real essence of religion, but something people believe in or consider to be religion.

The first definition substitutes for the conception of religion a faith held by the definer; the second definition substitutes a faith held by other people, something they take to be religion; while the third definition substitutes people's faith in something supplied to them as religion.

But what is faith? And why do people hold the faith they do hold? What is faith, and how did it arise?

Among the great mass of the cultured crowd of to-day it is considered a settled question that the essence of every religion consists in superstitious fear, aroused by the uncomprehended phenomena of Nature, and in the personification and deification of these natural forces and the worship of them.

This opinion is credulously accepted without criticism by the cultured crowd of to-day, and not only is it not refuted by the scientists, but among them it generally finds its strongest supporters. If voices are now and then raised (such as that of Max Müller and others) attributing to religion another origin and meaning, they pass almost unheard and unnoticed among the common and unanimous acknowledgement of religion in general as a manifestation of ignorance and superstition. Not long ago, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the most advanced men—if (like the Encyclopædists of the later part of the eighteenth century) they rejected Catholicism, Protestantism, and Russo-Greek Orthodoxy—never denied that religion in general has been, and is, an indispensable condition of life for every man. Not to mention the Deists (such as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Diderot, and Rousseau), Voltaire erected a monument to God, and Robespierre instituted a fête of the Supreme

Being. But in our time—thanks to the frivolous and superficial teaching of Auguste Comte (who, like most Frenchmen, really believed Christianity to be the same thing as Catholicism and saw in Catholicism the complete realization of Christianity)—it has been decided and taken for granted by the cultured crowd (always eager and prompt to accept the lowest view) that religion is only one special, long-outlived phase in the development of humanity, and a hindrance to its further progress. It is taken for granted that humanity has passed through two stages, the religious and the metaphysical, and has now entered on a third and highest one—the scientific—and that all religious manifestations among men are mere survivals of humanity's spiritual organ, which, like the fifth toe-nail of the horse, has long lost all meaning or importance.

It is taken for granted that the essence of religion lies in fear evoked by the unknown forces of Nature, in belief in imaginary beings and in worship of them, as in ancient times Democritus supposed and as the latest philosophers and historians of religion assert.

But apart from the consideration that belief in invisible, supernatural beings, or in one such being, does not always proceed from fear of the unknown forces of nature—as we see in the case of hundreds of the most advanced and highly-educated men of former times (Socrates, Descartes, Newton) as well as of our own day, whose recognition of the existence of a supreme, supernatural being certainly did not proceed from fear of the unknown forces of Nature—the assertion that religion arose from men's superstitious fear of the mysterious forces of Nature really affords no answer to the main question, 'What was it in men that gave them the conception of unseen, supernatural beings?'

If men feared thunder and lightning, they feared them as thunder and lightning; but why should they invent some invisible, supernatural being, Jupiter, who lives somewhere or other and sometimes throws arrows at people?

Men struck by the sight of death would fear death; but why should they invent souls of the dead with whom they entered into imaginary intercourse? From thunder men might hide. Fear of death might make them try to escape death. But if they invented an eternal and powerful being on whom they supposed themselves to depend, and if they invented live souls for dead people, they did this not simply from fear but for some other reasons. And in those reasons, evidently, lay the essence of the thing we call religion.

Moreover every man who has ever, even in childhood, experienced religious feeling, knows by personal experience that it was evoked in him, not by external, terrifying, material phenomena, but by an inner consciousness which had nothing to do with fear of the unknown forces of Nature—a consciousness of his own insignificance, loneliness, and guilt. And therefore, both by external observation and by personal experience, man may know that religion is not the worship of gods, evoked by superstitious fear of the invisible forces of Nature, proper to men only at a certain period of their development, but is something quite independent either of fear or of their degree of education—a something that cannot be destroyed by any development of culture. For man's consciousness of his finiteness amid an infinite universe, and of his sinfulness (i.e. of his not having done all he might and should have done) has always existed and will exist as long as man remains man.

Indeed everyone on emerging from the animal

conditions of infancy and earliest childhood when he lives guided only by the demands of his animal nature—everyone on awakening to rational consciousness cannot but notice that all around him lives, renewing itself undestroyed, and infallibly conforming to one definite, eternal law: and that he alone, recognizing himself as a being separate from the rest of the universe, is sentenced to die, to disappear into infinite space and endless time, and to suffer a tormenting consciousness of responsibility for his actions—i.e., the consciousness that having acted badly he could have done better. And understanding this, no reasonable man can help pausing to ask himself, 'What is the meaning of my momentary, uncertain, and unstable existence amid this eternal, firmly defined and unending universe?' Entering on truly human life a man cannot evade that question.

That question faces every man, and in one way or other every man answers it. And in the reply to that question lies the essence of every religion. The essence of religion consists solely in the answer to the question, 'Why do I live, and what is my relation to the infinite universe<sup>1</sup> around me?'

All the metaphysics of religion, all the doctrines about deities and about the origin of the world, and all external worship—which are usually supposed to be religion—are but indications (differing according to geographical, ethnographical, and historical circumstances) of the existence of religion. There is no religion from the most elevated to the coarsest that has not at its root this establishing of man's relation to the surrounding universe or to its first cause. There is no religious rite however coarse,

<sup>1</sup> 'Universe' is used here and elsewhere in its primary significance, embracing the totality of existing things, spiritual or material.—A. M.

nor any cult however refined, that has not this at its root. Every religious teaching is the expression which the founder of that religion has given of the relation he considered himself (and consequently all other people also) to occupy as a man towards the universe and its origin and first cause.

The expressions of these relations are very numerous, corresponding to the different ethnographical and historical conditions of the founders of these religions and the nations that adopted them. Moreover all these expressions are variously interpreted and perverted by the followers of teachers who were usually hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of years ahead of the comprehension of the masses. And so these relations of man to the universe—i.e. to religion—appear to be very numerous, though in reality there are only three fundamental relations in which men stand towards the universe and its author. They are: (1) The primitive, personal relation; (2) the pagan, social or family-State relation; (3) the Christian or divine relation.

Strictly speaking, there are only two fundamental relations in which man can stand towards the world: the *Personal*, which sees the meaning of life in personal well-being, obtained separately or in union with other individuals; and the *Christian*, which sees the meaning of life to consist in service of him who sent man into the world. The second of the three divisions mentioned in the first classification—the social—is really only an extension of the first.

The first of these perceptions, the oldest—now found among people on the lowest plane of moral development—consists in man considering himself to be a self-motivated being, living in the world to obtain the greatest possible personal happiness

regardless of the suffering such attainment may cause to others.

From this very primitive relation to the world (a relation in which every infant lives on first entering the world; in which humanity lived during the first, pagan, period of its development, and in which many of the morally-coarsest individuals and savage tribes still live) flowed the ancient pagan religions as well as the lowest forms of the later religions: Buddhism,<sup>1</sup> Taoism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity, in their perverted forms. From this relation to the world comes also modern Spiritualism, which has at its root a desire for the preservation and well-being of one's personality. All the pagan cults: divinations, the deification of beings who enjoy themselves like man, Saints who intercede for man, all sacrifices and prayers offered for man's earthly welfare and for deliverance from calamities—come from this conception of life.

The second form of the pagan relation of man to the world, the social, which he adopts at the next stage of development—a relation natural chiefly to adults—consists in seeing the meaning of life not in the welfare of one separate individual, but in the welfare of a group of individuals: a family, clan, nation, empire, or even of all humanity (as in the Positivist's attempt to found a religion).

In this relation of man to the world the meaning of life is transferred from the individual to a family,

<sup>1</sup> Buddhism, though demanding from its followers the renunciation of worldly blessings and even of life itself, is based on the same relation of a self-motivated personality (predestined to personal well-being) to the surrounding universe, but with this difference—that simple paganism considers man to have a right to happiness, while Buddhism considers that the world ought to disappear because it produces suffering to the personality. Buddhism is negative paganism.—L. T.

clan, nation, or empire—to a certain association of individuals whose welfare is considered to be the aim of existence. From this view come all religions of the patriarchal and social type: the Chinese and Japanese religions, the Jewish religion of a 'chosen people', the Roman State-religion, our Church and State religion (improperly called Christian but degraded to this level by Augustine), and the proposed Positivist religion of Humanity.

All the ceremonies of ancestor-worship in China and Japan; the worship of Emperors in Rome; the multitudinous Jewish ceremonials aiming at the preservation of an agreement between the chosen people and God; all family, social, and Church-Christian prayers for the welfare of the State or for success in war—rest on that understanding of man's relation to the universe.

The third conception of this relation, the Christian—of which all old men are involuntarily conscious and into which, in my opinion, humanity is now entering—consists in the meaning of life no longer appearing to lie in the attainment of personal aims or the aims of any association of individuals, but solely in serving that Will which has produced man and the entire universe not for man's aims but for its own.

From this relation to the world comes the highest religious teaching known to us, germs of which existed already among the Pythagoreans, Therapeutae, Essenes, and among the Egyptians, Persians, Brahmins, Buddhists, and Taoists, in their best representatives, but which received its complete and final expression only in Christianity in its true and unperverted meaning. All the ritual of those ancient religions that proceeded from this understanding of life, and in our time all the external forms of worship among the Unitarians, Universalists, Quakers, Ser-

bian Nazarenes, Russian Dukhobórs, and all the so-called rationalistic sects: their sermons, hymns, conferences and books, are religious manifestations of this relation of man to the universe.

All possible religions of whatever kind can, by the nature of the case, be classed according to these three ways of regarding the universe.

Every man who has emerged from the animal state inevitably adopts the first, or the second, or the third, of these relations, and that is what constitutes each man's true religion no matter to what faith he may nominally belong.

Every man necessarily conceives some relation between himself and the universe, for an intelligent being cannot live in the universe that surrounds him without having some relation to it. And since man has as yet devised but three relations that we know of to the universe—it follows that every man inevitably holds one of these three, and whether he wishes to or not, belongs to one of the three fundamental religions among which the human race is divided.

Therefore the assertion, very common among the cultured crowd of Christendom, that they have risen to such a height of development that they no longer need or possess any religion, only amounts to this—that repudiating the Christian religion which is the only one natural to our time, they hold to the lower, social, family, State religion, or to the primitive pagan religion, without being aware of the fact. A man without a religion—i.e., without any relation to the universe—is as impossible as a man without a heart. He may not know he has a religion, just as a man may not know he has a heart, but he can no more exist without a religion than without a heart.

Religion is the relation in which a man acknow-



ledges himself to stand towards the infinite universe around him or towards its source and first cause, and a rational man must have some relation to them.

But you will perhaps say that to define man's relation to the universe is not the affair of religion but of philosophy, or of science in general if one includes philosophy as part of science. I do not think so. On the contrary I think that the supposition that science in its widest sense, including philosophy as part of it, can define man's relation to the universe is quite erroneous, and that this supposition is the chief cause of the confusion concerning religion, science, and morality, which prevails among the cultured classes of our society.

Science, including philosophy, cannot define man's relation to the infinite universe or its source were it only for this reason—that before any philosophy or science could arise, *that* must already have existed without which no activity of thought or relation of any kind between man and the universe, is possible.

As a man cannot by any possible motion discover in which direction he ought to move, and yet every movement is necessarily performed in some direction, so also it is impossible by mental effort in philosophy or science to discover the direction in which such efforts should be performed, and yet all mental effort is necessarily performed in some direction that has been predetermined for it. And it is religion that always indicates this direction for all mental work. All known philosophers, from Plato to Schopenhauer, have always and inevitably followed a direction given them by religion. The philosophy of Plato and his followers was a pagan philosophy which examined the means of obtaining the greatest possible well-being for separate indi-

viduals and for an association of individuals in a State. The Church-Christian philosophy of the Middle Ages, proceeding from a similar pagan conception of life, investigated ways of obtaining salvation for the individual—that is, ways of obtaining the greatest personal welfare in a future life, and only in its theocratic attempts did it treat of arrangements for the welfare of society.

Modern philosophy, both Hegel's and Comte's, has at its root the State-social religious conception of life. The pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, wishing to free itself from Judaeo-religious cosmology, involuntarily adopted the religious basis of Buddhism.

Philosophy always has been, and always will be, simply the investigation of the consequences that result from the relation religion establishes between man and the universe, for until that relation is settled there is nothing on which philosophy can work.

So also with positive science in the restricted meaning of the word. Such science always has been, and always will be, merely the investigation and study of all such objects and phenomena as, in consequence of a certain relation religion has set up between man and the universe, appear to demand investigation.

Science always has been and will be, not the study of 'everything', as scientists now naively suppose (that is impossible, for there are an incalculable quantity of objects that might be studied), but only of such things as religion selects (in due order and according to their degree of importance) from among the incalculable quantity of objects, phenomena, and conditions, awaiting examination. And therefore science is not one and indivisible, but there are as many sciences as there are religions.

Each religion selects a range of objects for investigation, and therefore the science of each different time and people inevitably bears the character of the religion from whose point of view it sees its objects.

Thus pagan science, re-established at the Renaissance and now flourishing in our society under the title of Christian, always was, and continues to be, merely an investigation of all those conditions from which man may obtain the greatest welfare, and of all such phenomena as can be made to promote that end. Brahman and Buddhist philosophic science was always merely the investigation of those conditions under which man escapes from the sufferings that oppress him. Hebrew science (the Talmud) was always merely the study and explanation of the conditions which man had to observe in order to fulfil his contract with God and to keep the chosen people at the height of their vocation. Church-Christian science has been and is an investigation of the conditions under which salvation can be obtained by man. True Christian science, such as is only now being born, is an investigation of the conditions enabling man to know the demands of the Supreme Will from whence he came, and how to apply those demands to life.

Neither philosophy nor science can establish man's relation to the universe, for that relation must be established before any philosophy or science can begin. They cannot do it for this further reason—that science, including philosophy as part of it, investigates phenomena intellectually—independently of the investigator's position or the feelings he experiences. But man's relation to the world is defined not by intellect alone but also by feeling and the whole combination of his spiritual forces. However much you may assure a man and explain

to him, that all that truly exists is only idea; or that everything consists of atoms; or that the essence of life is substance, or will; or that heat, light, movement and electricity are different manifestations of one and the same energy; to a being who feels, suffers, rejoices, fears and hopes, it will all fail to explain his place in the universe.

That place, and consequently his relation to the universe, is shown to him by religion, which says to him: 'The world exists for you, therefore take from life all you can get from it,' or: 'You are a member of a chosen nation loved by God, therefore serve that nation, do all that God has demanded, and you together with your nation will receive the greatest welfare obtainable,' or: 'You are an instrument of the Supreme Will which has sent you into the world to perform an appointed task; learn that Will and fulfil it and you will do for yourself the best it is possible for you to do.'

To understand the statements of philosophy and science, preparation and study are necessary, but for religious comprehension they are not necessary: it is given to everyone, even to the most limited and ignorant of men.

For a man to know his relation to the world around him or to its source, he needs neither philosophic nor scientific knowledge (an abundance of knowledge burdening the consciousness is rather a hindrance), but he needs, if but for a time, to renounce the cares of the world, to have a consciousness of his material insignificance, and to have sincerity—conditions most often met with (as is said in the Gospels) among children and among the plainest, unlearned folk. That is why we often see that the simplest, least-learned, and least-educated people quite clearly, consciously, and easily, assimilate the highest Christian understanding of life,

while very learned and cultured men continue to stagnate in crude paganism. So, for instance, there are most refined and highly educated people who see the meaning of life in personal enjoyment or in avoidance of suffering, as did the very wise and highly educated Schopenhauer, or in the salvation of the soul by Sacraments and means of grace, as highly educated Bishops have done, while an almost illiterate Russian peasant sectarian sees the meaning of life, without any mental effort, as it was seen by the greatest sages of the world (Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Seneca)—in acknowledging oneself an instrument of God's will, a son of God.

But you will ask me: 'What is the essence of this non-philosophic, non-scientific kind of knowledge? If it is neither philosophic nor scientific, what is it? How is it definable?' To these questions I can only reply that, as religious knowledge is that on which all other knowledge rests, and as it precedes all other knowledge, we cannot define it, for we have no means enabling us to do so. In theological language this knowledge is called revelation and, if one does not attach a mystic meaning to the word 'revelation', that term is quite correct; for this knowledge is not obtained by study, nor by the efforts of one man or of many men, but only by one man or many men accepting that manifestation of infinite wisdom, which is gradually revealing itself to mankind.

Why were people unable, ten thousand years ago, to understand that the meaning of life is not limited to the welfare of one's personality, and why did a time come when a higher understanding of life—the family, social, national, State understanding of life—was revealed to them? Why, within historic memory, was the Christian view of life disclosed to men? And why was it disclosed to this man or that

people in particular, and why precisely at such a time in one and not in another form? To try to answer these questions by seeking for reasons in the historic conditions of the time, life, and character and special qualities of those who first made this view of life their own and first expressed it, is like trying to answer the question, 'Why does the rising sun light up some objects before reaching others?' The sun of truth rising higher and higher over the world lights up more and more of it, and is reflected first by those objects which are first reached by its illuminating rays and are best fitted to reflect them. But the qualities which make some men more suited to receive the rising truth are not any special active qualities of mind, but on the contrary are passive qualities of heart, rarely coinciding with great and inquisitive intellect: renunciation of the cares of the world, consciousness of one's own material insignificance, and great sincerity, as we see exemplified by all the founders of religion, who were never remarkable either for philosophic or scientific erudition.

In my opinion the chief mistake, and the one which more than any other hinders the true progress of our Christian branch of humanity, lies in the fact that the scientists (who now occupy the seat of Moses)—guiding themselves by the pagan view of life re-established at the time of the Renaissance, and accepting as the essence of Christianity something that is really a rude perversion of it—have decided that Christianity is a condition humanity has outlived, and that the ancient, pagan, State-social view of life held by them (one that is really worn out) is the very highest understanding of life and the one humanity should persistently cling to. Holding this view, they not only do not understand Christianity—that highest view of life humanity is

approaching—but they do not even try to understand it.

The chief source of this misunderstanding lies in the fact that the scientists, parting company with Christianity and recognizing that their science does not accord with it, have decided that the fault lies with Christianity and not with their science. That is to say, they are pleased to believe not what is really the case, that their science is eighteen hundred years behind Christianity, which already influences a large part of contemporary society, but that Christianity has lagged eighteen hundred years behind science.

From this reversal of roles comes the astonishing fact that no people have a more confused conception of the essence and true importance of religion, of morality, or of life, than scientists; and the yet more astonishing fact that the science of to-day—while accomplishing really great success in investigating the phenomena of the material world—turns out to be of no use for the direction of human life, or even does actual harm.

And therefore I think that certainly it is neither philosophy nor science that determines man's relation to the universe, but it is *always religion*.

So to your first question, 'What do I understand by the word *religion*,' I reply: *Religion is a relation man sets up between himself and the endless and infinite universe, or its source and first cause.*

From this answer to the first question the answer to the second follows naturally.

If religion is a relation man establishes towards the universe—a relation which determines the meaning of life—then *morality* is the indication and explanation of such human activity as naturally results from men holding this or that relation towards the universe. And as only two such fundamental relations

are known to us, if we consider the pagan, social relation as an enlargement of the personal, or three if we count the social, pagan relation separately—it follows that only three moral teachings exist: the primitive, savage, personal; the pagan, family, State, or social; and the Christian or divine teaching of service to man or to God.

From the first of these relations of man to the universe flows the teaching of morality common to all pagan religions that have at their base the striving after welfare for the separate individual, and that therefore define all the conditions yielding most welfare to the individual and indicate means to obtain such welfare. From this relation to the world flow the pagan teachings: the Epicurean in its lowest form; the Mohammedan teaching of morality which promises coarse personal welfare in this and the next world; the Church-Christian teaching of morality aiming at salvation—that is, at the welfare of one's personality, especially in the other world; and also the worldly utilitarian morality aiming at the welfare of the individual only in this world.

From the same teaching, which places the aim of life in personal welfare and therefore in freedom from personal suffering, flow the moral teaching of Buddhism in its crude form and the worldly doctrine of the pessimist.

From the second, pagan relation of man to the universe, which sees the aim of life in securing welfare for a group of individuals, flow the moral teachings which demand that man should serve the group whose welfare is regarded as the aim of life. According to that teaching personal welfare is only allowable to the extent to which it can be obtained for the whole group of people who form the religious basis of life. From that relation to the universe flow



the well-known Roman and Greek moral teachings in which personality always sacrifices itself for society, and also the Chinese morality. From this relation flows also the Jewish morality—the subordination of one's own welfare to that of the chosen people—and also the Church and State morality of our own times, which demands the sacrifice of the individual for the good of the State. From this relation to the universe flows also the morality of most women, who sacrifice their whole personality for the benefit of their family and especially for their children.

All ancient history, and to some extent medieval and modern history, teems with descriptions of deeds of just this family, social, or State morality. And the majority of people to-day—though they think their morality is Christian because they profess Christianity—really hold this family, State, pagan morality, and hold it up as an ideal when educating the young generation.

From the third, the Christian, relation to the universe—which consists in man's considering himself to be an instrument of the Supreme Will for the accomplishment of its ends—flow the moral teachings which correspond to that understanding of life, elucidating man's dependence on the Supreme Will and defining its demands. From that relation of man to the universe flow all the highest moral teachings known to man: the Pythagorean, the Stoic, the Buddhist, the Brahminical, and the Taoist, in their highest manifestations, and the Christian teaching in its real meaning, demanding renunciation of one's personal will—and not only of one's own welfare, but even of that of one's family, society, and country—for the sake of fulfilling the will of him who sent us into life: a will revealed by our conscience. From the first, the second, or the

third of these relations to the infinite universe or to its source, flows each man's real, unfeigned morality, no matter what he may profess or preach as morality or in what light he may wish to appear.

So that a man who considers the reality of his relation to the universe to lie in obtaining the greatest welfare for himself—however much he may say he considers it moral to live for his family, for society, for the State, for humanity, or for the performance of God's will—and however artfully he may pretend and may deceive men, will still always have as his real motive of action simply his individual welfare; so that when a choice has to be made he will not sacrifice his own personality for his family or State, nor to do the will of God, but will sacrifice them all for his own sake. Since he sees the meaning of life only in personal welfare he cannot do otherwise until such time as he alters his relation to the universe.

And similarly one whose relation to life consists in the service of his own family (as is the case with most women), or of his clan or nation (as among members of the oppressed nationalities and among men politically active in times of strife)—no matter how much he may declare himself to be a Christian, his morality will always be family or national and not Christian, and when any conflict arises between family or social welfare on one side, and that of his personality or the fulfilment of the will of God on the other, he will inevitably choose the service of the group for whom, in his view of life, he exists: for only in such service does he see the meaning of his life. And in the same way a man who regards his relation to the world as consisting in fulfilling the will of Him who sent him hither—however much you may impress upon him that he should (in accord with the demands of his personality, or of

his family, his nation, empire, or all humanity) commit acts contrary to the Supreme Will of which the operation of the reason and love wherewith he is endowed makes him aware—will always sacrifice all human ties rather than fail to comply with the Will that has sent him here: for only in such compliance does he discern a meaning for his life.

Morality cannot be independent of religion, for not only is it a consequence of religion—that is, a consequence of the relation in which a man feels that he stands towards the universe—but it is implicit (*impliquée*, as the French say) in religion. Every religion is an answer to the question: ‘What is the meaning of my life?’ And the religious answer involves a certain moral demand, which may follow or may precede the explanation of the meaning of life. To the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’ the reply may be: ‘The meaning of life lies in the welfare of the individual, therefore make use of all the advantages within your reach’; or, ‘The meaning of life lies in the welfare of a certain group of people, therefore serve that group with all your strength’; or, ‘The meaning of life lies in fulfilling the will of Him that sent you, therefore try with all your strength to know that will and to fulfil it.’ Or the same question may be answered in this way: ‘The meaning of your life lies in your personal enjoyment, for that is the object of man’s existence’; or, ‘The meaning of your life lies in serving the group of which you consider yourself a member, for that is your destiny’; or, ‘The meaning of your life lies in the service of God, for that is your destiny.’

Morality is included in the explanation of the meaning of life that religion gives, and can therefore in no way be separated from religion. This truth is particularly evident in the attempts of

non-Christian philosophers to deduce a doctrine of the highest morality from their philosophy. Such philosophers see that Christian morality is indispensable, that we cannot live without it; they even see that it is an already existing fact, and they want to find some way to attach it to their non-Christian philosophy and even to put things in such a way that Christian morality may seem to result from their pagan social philosophy. That is what they attempt, but their very efforts show more clearly than anything else that Christian morality is not merely independent of pagan philosophy, but that it stands in complete contradiction to that philosophy of individual welfare, or of liberation from individual suffering, or of social welfare.

The Christian ethics, which in accord with our religious conception of life we acknowledge, demand not only the sacrifice of one's personality for the group, but the renunciation alike of one's personality and of one's group for the service of God; but pagan philosophy only investigates means of obtaining the greatest welfare for the individual or for the group of individuals, and therefore a contrast is inevitable. And there is only one way of hiding this contrast—namely, by piling up abstract conditional conceptions one on another, and keeping to the misty domain of metaphysics.

That is what most of the post-Renaissance philosophers have done, and to this circumstance—the impossibility of making the demands of Christian morality (which have been admitted in advance) accord with a philosophy built on pagan foundations—must be attributed the terrible unreality, obscurity, unintelligibility, and estrangement from life, that characterizes modern philosophy. With the exception of Spinoza (whose philosophy develops from truly Christian roots in spite of the

fact that he did not consider himself a Christian) and Kant (a man of genius, who admittedly treated his system of ethics as not dependent on his metaphysics), all the philosophers, even the brilliant Schopenhauer, evidently devised artificial connexions between their ethics and their metaphysics.

It is felt that Christian ethics are something that must be accepted in advance, standing quite firmly, not dependent on philosophy and in no need of the fictitious props put to support them; and it is felt that Philosophy merely devises certain propositions in order that ethics may not contradict her but may rather be bound to her and appear to flow from her. All such propositions, however, only appear to justify Christian ethics while they are considered in the abstract. As soon as they are applied to questions of practical life, the non-correspondence, and more, the evident contradiction between the philosophic basis and what we consider to be morality, appears in full strength.

The unfortunate Nietzsche, who has latterly become so celebrated, rendered a valuable service by his exposure of this contradiction. He is incontrovertible when he says that all rules of morality, from the point of view of the current non-Christian philosophy, are mere lies and hypocrisy and that it is much more profitable, pleasant and reasonable, for a man to devise his own Supermen (*Uebermenschen*) and be one of them, than to be one of the mass which has to serve as the scaffold for these Supermen. No philosophical constructions founded on the pagan-religious view of life can prove to anyone that it is more profitable or wiser for him to live, not for a welfare he desires, comprehends, and sees to be possible for himself or for his family or his society, but for another's welfare—undesired, not understood, and unattainable by his

puny human power. Philosophy founded on an understanding of life limited to the welfare of man will never be able to prove to a rational man, who knows that he may die at any moment, that he ought, and that it is good for him to forgo his own desired, understood, and undoubted welfare—not even for any certain welfare to others (for he can never know what will result from his sacrifices), but merely because it is right or good to do so: that it is a categorical imperative.

To prove this from the point of view of pagan philosophy is impossible. To prove that people are all equal—that it is better for a man to sacrifice his life in the service of others than to trample on the lives of others, making them serve him—one must redefine one's relation to the universe: one must prove that man's position is such that he has no option, since the meaning of his life lies only in the execution of the will of Him that sent him, and the will of Him that sent him is that he should give his life to the service of men. And such a change in man's relation to the universe comes only from religion.

Thus it is with the attempts to deduce Christian morality from, and to reconcile it with, the fundamental positions of pagan science. No sophistries or subtleties of thought can destroy this simple and clear position, that the law of evolution, which lies at the base of all the science of to-day, is founded on a general, eternal, and unalterable law—the law of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest; and that therefore each man, to attain his own and his group's welfare, should try to be that 'fittest' and to make his group such, in order that he and his group should not perish, but some other man or group that is less fit.

However much some naturalists, frightened by

the logical consequences of this law and by their application to human life, may try to perplex the matter with words and to exorcise this law—their efforts only make still more evident the irresistibility of that law, which rules the life of the whole organic world, and therefore that of man regarded as an animal.

Since I began writing this article, a Russian translation has appeared of an article by Mr. Huxley, composed of a speech on Evolution and Ethics<sup>1</sup> delivered by him to some English Society. In this article the learned Professor—like our well-known Professor Bekétov and many others who have written on the same subject, and with as little success as his predecessors—tries to prove that the struggle for existence does not infringe morality, and that side by side with the acknowledgement of the struggle for existence as a fundamental law of life, morality may not merely exist but even progress. Mr. Huxley's article is full of all kinds of jokes, verses, and general views on ancient religion and philosophy, and is consequently so florid and complicated that it is only with great effort that one is able to reach its fundamental thought. That thought however is as follows: The law of evolution runs counter to the moral law; this was known to the ancient Greeks and Hindus. The philosophy and religion of both those peoples brought them to the doctrine of self-renunciation. That doctrine, the author thinks, is not correct; the correct one is this: A law exists, which the author calls the cosmic law, in accord with which all beings struggle against one another and only the fittest survive. Man also is subject to this law; and thanks only to it has man

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Huxley's Romanes Lecture, delivered in 1894, and contained in *Evolution and Ethics*, issued by Macmillan & Co.—A. M.

become what he now is. But this law runs counter to morality. How then can it be reconciled with morality? That can be accomplished in this way: A law of social progress exists which seeks to check the cosmic process and to replace it by another, an ethical, process, the object of which is the survival, not of the fittest but of the best in an ethical sense. Where this ethical process sprang from, Mr. Huxley does not explain, but in his twentieth foot-note he says that the basis of this process is, on the one hand that people, like animals, prefer to be in company and therefore suppress in themselves qualities harmful to society; and on the other hand that the members of a society forcibly suppress actions contrary to social welfare. It seems to Mr. Huxley that this process, obliging men to curb their passions for the sake of preserving the group of which they are members, and for fear of being punished if they disturb the order of their group, supplies that ethical law the existence of which he wishes to demonstrate. It seems to Mr. Huxley in the naiveté of his soul, that in English society as it exists to-day—with its Irish problem, the poverty of its lowest classes, the insensate luxury of the rich, its trade in opium and spirits, its executions, its slaughter or extermination of tribes for the sake of trade and politics, its secret vice and its hypocrisy—the man who does not infringe the police regulations is a moral man guided by the ethical law. He forgets that the qualities needful to maintain the society in which a man lives may be useful for that society—as the members of a band of robbers may be useful to that band, and as in our own society we find a use for the qualities of executioners, jailers, judges, soldiers, and hypocrite-priests, &c.—but that these qualities have nothing in common with morality.

Morality is something continually developing and



growing, and therefore conformity to the existing rules of a certain society and their preservation by means of the axe or the scaffold (to which Mr. Huxley alludes as to instruments of morality), will not only not tend to the maintenance, but will be an infringement, of morality. And on the contrary every infringement of the existing order—such as were not only the infringements committed by Jesus and his disciples of the regulations of a Roman province, but the infringements of present-day regulations by one who refuses to take part in legal proceedings, military service, or the payment of taxes levied for warlike preparations—will not only not be an infringement of morality, but will be an inevitable condition of its manifestation.

Every cannibal who perceives that he should not eat his fellow men and who acts accordingly, infringes the order of his society. And therefore though action infringing the order of any society *may* be immoral, every truly moral action which pushes forward the limits of morality is always *sure* to be an infringement of the order of society. If therefore a law has appeared in society in accord with which people sacrifice their personal advantages for the preservation of the integrity of their group, that law is not the ethical law, but on the contrary will generally be a law contrary to all ethics—that same law of the struggle for existence, but in a hidden latent form. It is the same struggle for existence, but carried over from the individual to a group of individuals. It is not the cessation of the fight, but only a backward swinging of the arm to strike a harder blow.

If the law of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest is the eternal law of all life (and it cannot but be admitted to be so when we regard man as an animal)—then no tangled discussions

about social progress and an ethical law supposed to flow from it, or to spring up from no one knows where just when we happen to need it (like a *deus ex machina*), can disturb that law.

If social progress, as Mr. Huxley assures us, collects people into groups, then the struggle and the survival will continue among those families, clans, and nations, and the struggle will not only not be more moral, but it will be even more cruel and more immoral than that between individuals, as we see in actual life. Even if we admit the impossible, and suppose that in another thousand years all humanity will, by social progress alone, be united into one whole and form a single nation and a single State—even then (not to mention that the struggle abolished between nations and States will continue between man and the animal world, and will always remain a struggle—that is, will remain an activity quite excluding the possibility of the Christian morality we confess)—even then the struggle between individuals forming this union and between the groups of families, clans, and nationalities, will not be diminished but will continue in a new form, as we see in all aggregations of individuals, families, races, and States. The members of a family quarrel and fight with one another as well as with outsiders, and often to a greater degree and with more venom. It is just the same thing in the State; among people living in one State a struggle continues just as with people outside the State, only it is carried on under other forms. In the one case the slaughter is done with arrows and knives, in the other it is done by hunger. And if both in the family and in the State the weak are saved, that is not done by social union, but occurs because love and self-sacrifice exist among the people united in families and in States. If, outside

the family, only the fittest of two children survives, while in a good mother's family both remain alive, this does not result from union into families, but from the fact that the mother possesses love and self-sacrifice. And neither self-sacrifice nor love can result from a social process.

To assert that a social process produces morality is like asserting that the construction of stoves produces heat.

Heat comes from the sun, and stoves produce heat only when fuel (the result of the sun's work) is put into them. Just so morality comes from religion. Special forms of social life produce morality only when the results of religious influence—which is morality—are put into them.

Stoves may be heated and give warmth, or may not be heated and may remain cold; just as social forms may contain morality and thus have a moral influence on society, or may not contain morality and so remain without influence on society.

Christian morality cannot be based on a pagan or social conception of life and cannot be deduced either from philosophy or from non-Christian science; and not only can it not be deduced from them, but it cannot even be reconciled with them.

That is how the matter has always been understood by every serious and strictly consistent philosophy and science, which said, quite reasonably: 'If our propositions do not tally with morality, so much the worse for morality', and continued their investigations.

Ethical treatises not founded on religion, and even secular catechisms, are written and taught, and people may suppose that humanity is guided by them; but that only seems to be the case, because people are really guided not by those treatises and catechisms but by the religions which they have

always possessed and still possess, whereas these treatises and catechisms only counterfeit what flows naturally from religion.

The dictates of secular morality not based on a religious teaching are just like the action of a man who, though ignorant of music, should take the conductor's seat and begin to wave his arms before the experienced musicians who were performing. The music would continue for awhile by its own momentum and because of what the musicians had learned from former conductors; but the waving of a stick by a man ignorant of music would obviously not merely be useless, but would in course of time certainly confuse the musicians and disorganize the orchestra. A similar confusion begins to take place in people's minds at the present time in consequence of attempts made by leading men to teach people a morality not founded on that highest religion which begins to be assimilated, and has already been partly assimilated, by Christian humanity.

It is indeed desirable to have moral teaching unmixed with superstition, but the fact is that moral teaching is a result of a certain relation man holds towards the universe or towards God. If that relation is expressed in forms which seem to us superstitious, we should, to put the matter right, try to express that relation more reasonably, clearly, and exactly, or even to destroy the former relation (now become inadequate) of man to the universe and substitute for it one that is higher, clearer, and more reasonable; but we should in no case devise a so-called secular, non-religious morality founded on sophistry or simply founded on nothing at all.

The attempts to found a morality apart from religion, are like the attempts of children who, wishing to transplant a flower that pleases them,

pluck it from the roots that seem to them unpleasing and superfluous, and stick it rootless into the ground. Without religion there can be no real, sincere morality, just as without roots there can be no real flower.

So in answer to your two questions, I say: *'Religion is a certain relation established by man between his separate personality and the infinite universe or its Source. And morality is the ever-present guide to life, which results from that relation.'*

[December 28, O.S., 1894.]

# REASON AND RELIGION

## A LETTER TO AN INQUIRER

YOU ask me:

1. Should men of no special intellectual gifts seek to express in words truths they have reached relating to the inner life?

2. Is it worth while to try to attain full and clear understanding of one's inner life?

3. How in moments of struggle or doubt are we to know whether it is conscience that speaks to us, or whether it is intellect bribed by our infirmities? (For brevity's sake, I have restated this third question in my own words, without, I hope, altering your meaning.)

These three questions, it seems to me, are all summed up in the second; for if we should not try to attain full and clear understanding of our inner life, then also we should not and cannot express in words the truths we have reached, and in moments of doubt we shall have nothing to guide us in distinguishing between conscience and false reasoning. But if it is right to seek the greatest clearness one's mental powers can attain (whether those powers be great or small), then we should also express in words the truths we have reached and by those truths, elucidated to the utmost and expressed in words, we must be guided in moments of struggle or doubt. And therefore I answer your root question in the affirmative; namely, that every man in order to accomplish the purpose for which he was sent here and to attain true well-being (the two always accord) should exert the whole strength of his mind to elucidate for himself the religious foundations on

which he rests, that is to say, he should clear up the purpose of his life.

Among uneducated navvies, whose work is paid for by the cubic fathom, I have often met with a prevalent conviction that mathematical calculations are deceptive and should not be trusted. Whether this is because they do not know mathematics, or because those who calculate the earth they have dug up often intentionally or unintentionally cheat them, the fact remains that a disbelief in the sufficiency or applicability of mathematics for the estimation of quantities has firmly established itself among these uneducated labourers, and for most of them has become an unquestioned verity which they do not even consider it necessary to prove. A similar opinion has established itself among people whom I may safely call *irreligious*—an opinion to the effect that reason cannot solve religious questions, that the application of reason to these questions is the chief source of errors, and that to solve religious questions by reason is an act of wicked pride.

I mention this because the doubt expressed in your questions as to whether one should try to attain full and clear understanding, can only arise from the supposition that reason cannot be applied to the solution of religious questions. Yet that supposition is as strange and as obviously false as the supposition that calculation cannot solve mathematical questions.

Man has received direct from God only one instrument wherewith to know himself and to know his relation to the universe—he has no other—and that instrument is reason: and suddenly he is told that his reason may be used to elucidate his home, family, business, political, scientific or artistic problems, but may not be used to clear up the very thing

for which it was chiefly given him. It would seem that to clear up the most important truths, those on which his whole life depends, man must on no account use his reason, but must recognize such truths apart from his reason, though apart from his reason man can know nothing. People say: 'Recognize by inspiration, by faith': but the fact is that man cannot even believe apart from his reason. If a man believes one thing and not another, he does this only because his reason tells him he should not believe this but should believe that. To say that a man should not be guided by reason, is the same as to say to a man carrying a lamp in a dark catacomb that to find the way out he must extinguish his lamp and be guided, not by light but by something else.

But perhaps it will be said (as you say in your letter) that not all men are gifted with great intellect, and especially not with capacity to express their thoughts; and by an unskillful expression of their thoughts about religion they may therefore occasion error. To that I will reply in the words of the Gospel, that what is hidden from the wise is revealed to babes. And this saying is not an exaggeration or a paradox (as we are accustomed to consider sayings in the Gospels that do not please us), but is a statement of the simplest and most indubitable truth, namely, that to every being in the world a law is given which that being should follow, and that to enable him to perceive this law every being has received suitable organs. And therefore every man is gifted with reason, and by that reason the law he should follow is revealed to each man. That law is hidden only from those who do not wish to follow it, and who, in order not to obey the law, reject reason, and instead of using the reason given to them wherewith to discern truth, accept



on faith the guidance of others who have also rejected reason.

The law man should follow is so simple that it is accessible to every child: especially as man need not rediscover this law of his life. Those who lived before us discovered and expressed it, and a man need only verify by his own reason the propositions he finds expressed in tradition—accepting or rejecting them. But he must not do as people advise who prefer not to obey the law: he must not check his reason by tradition, but contrariwise must check tradition by reason. Traditions may come from man and be false, but reason certainly comes from God and cannot be false. And therefore no specially great capacities are needed to know and express the truth; we need only believe that reason is not only the highest, the divine quality in man, but that it is the only instrument he possesses for the attainment of truth.

Special talents and intellectual gifts are needed, not for the knowledge and statement of truth but for the invention and statement of falsehood. Once they abandon the indications of reason and instead of believing them credulously accept what is offered to them as truth, people pile up and credulously accept such complex, unnatural, and contradictory propositions (usually in the guise of laws, revelations, and dogmas), that to express them and connect them with any truth really needs great subtlety of mind and exceptional gifts. One need only imagine to oneself a man of our world, educated in the religious beliefs of any one of the Christian Churches—Catholic, Russo-Greek Orthodox, or Protestant—who should wish to elucidate the religious principles with which he has been inoculated in childhood and to connect them with real life—what a complex intellectual labour he

would have to perform in order to adjust all the contradictions contained in the faith with which his education had inoculated him: a God who is the Creator and is good, creates evil, condemns people, demands a ransom and so on; and we ourselves profess a law of love and forgiveness yet we execute people, make war, take their produce from the poor, and the like.

For the disentanglement of these insoluble contradictions, or rather in order to hide them from oneself, great ability and special mental endowments are necessary; but to know the law of one's life, or, as you express it, to attain full and clear understanding of one's belief, no special mental gifts are required—we only need be careful not to accept anything contrary to reason, not to deny our reason, to guard our reason religiously, and believe in it alone. If the meaning of his life seems obscure to a man, this does not prove that his reason is incompetent to explain that meaning; it only indicates that he has credulously accepted too much that is irrational, and that what has not been verified by reason must be set aside.

And therefore my answer to your root question as to whether we must strive to attain a clear understanding of our inner life, is that that is the most necessary and important thing we can do in life. It is necessary and important because the only reasonable meaning of our life consists in fulfilment of the will of God who has sent us here. But the will of God is known, not by some extraordinary miracle, the writing of the law by the finger of the Deity on stone tablets, the compilation by the aid of the Holy Ghost of an infallible book, or by the infallibility of some holy man or collection of men, but only by the use of reason by all men, transmitting both by deed and by word, one to another, the consciousness

of truth that is ever more and more elucidating itself to them. That knowledge never has been, nor ever will be, complete, but it ever increases as humanity advances: the longer we live the more clearly we know God's will, and, consequently, the more we know what we should do to fulfil it. And so I think the clearing up by each man (however small he may seem to himself or to others—the least are the greatest) of all religious truth accessible to him, and its expression in words (for expression in words is one sure sign of complete clearness in thought), is one of the chief and most holy duties of man.

I shall be very glad if my reply in any degree satisfies you.

[November 26, 1894.]

## HOW TO READ THE GOSPELS AND WHAT IS ESSENTIAL IN THEM

THERE is so much that is strange, improbable, unintelligible, and even contradictory, in what professes to be Christ's teaching, that people do not know how to understand it.

It is very differently understood by different people. Some say Redemption is the all-important matter; others say the all-important thing is grace obtainable through the Sacraments; others, again, that submission to the Church is what is really essential. But the Churches themselves disagree, and interpret the teaching variously. The Roman Catholic Church holds that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, that the Pope is infallible, and that salvation is obtainable chiefly through works. The Lutheran Church disagrees and considers that faith is what is chiefly needed for salvation. The Orthodox Russo-Greek Church considers that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father only, and that both works and faith are necessary to salvation. And the Anglican and other Episcopalian Churches, the Presbyterian and the Methodist, not to mention hundreds of others, all interpret Christ's teaching in their own way.

Young men and men of the people, doubting the truth of the Church teaching in which they have been brought up, often come to me and ask what *my* teaching is and how *I* understand Christ's teaching? Such questions always grieve and even shock me.

Christ, who the Churches say was God, came on earth to reveal divine truth to men for their guidance in life. A man—even a plain stupid man

—if he wants to give people guidance of importance to them, will manage to impart it so that they can make out what he means. And is it possible that God, having come on earth specially to save people, was not able to say what he wanted to say clearly enough to prevent people from misinterpreting his words and disagreeing with each other about them?

This could not be so if Christ were God; and even if Christ were not God, but merely a great teacher, it is not possible that he failed to express himself clearly. For a great teacher is great just because he is able to express the truth so that it can neither be hidden nor obscured but is as plain as daylight.

In either case therefore the Gospels which transmit Christ's teaching must contain truth. And indeed the truth is there for all who will read the Gospels with a sincere wish to know the truth, without prejudice, and, above all, without supposing that they contain some special sort of wisdom beyond human reason.

That is how I read the Gospels, and I found in them truth plain enough for little children to understand, as indeed is said in the Gospels. So that when I am asked what *my* teaching consists in, and how *I* understand Christ's teaching, I reply: 'I have no teaching, but I understand Christ's teaching as it is explained in the Gospels. If I have written books about Christ's teaching, I have done so only to show the falseness of interpretations given by commentators on the Gospels.'

To understand Christ's real teaching the chief thing is not to interpret the Gospels, but to understand them as they are written. And therefore to the question how Christ's teaching should be understood, I reply: 'If you wish to understand it, read the Gospels. Read them, putting aside all foregone conclusions; read them with the sole desire to

understand what is there said. But just because the Gospels are holy books, read them considerately, reasonably, and with discernment, and not haphazard or mechanically as though all the words were of equal weight.'

To understand any book one must choose out the parts that are quite clear, dividing them from what is obscure or confused. And from what is clear we must form our idea of the drift and spirit of the whole work. Then, on the basis of what we have understood, we may proceed to make out what is confused or not quite intelligible. That is how we read all kinds of books. And it is particularly necessary thus to read the Gospels, which have passed through a multiplicity of compilations, translations, and transcriptions, and were composed eighteen centuries ago by men who were not highly educated and who were superstitious.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, in order to understand the Gospels we must first of all separate what is quite simple and intelligible from what is confused and unintelligible, and must afterwards read this clear and intelligible part several times over, trying fully to assimilate it. Then helped by the comprehension of the general meaning, we can try to explain to ourselves the drift of the parts which seemed involved and obscure.

<sup>1</sup> The Gospels, as is known to all who have studied their origin, far from being infallible expressions of divine truth, are the work of innumerable minds and hands, and are full of errors. Therefore they can in no case be taken as a production of the Holy Ghost, as Churchmen assert. Were that so, God would have revealed the Gospels as He is said to have revealed the Commandments on Mount Sinai, or He would have transmitted the complete book to men, as the Mormons declare was the case with their Holy Scriptures. But we know how these works were written and collected, and how they were corrected and translated, and therefore not only can we not accept them as infallible revelations, but we must, if we respect truth, correct errors that we find in them.—L. T.

That was how I read the Gospels, and the meaning of Christ's teaching became so clear to me that it was impossible to have any doubts about it. And I advise everyone who wishes to understand the true meaning of Christ's teaching to follow the same plan.

Let each man in reading the Gospels select all that seems to him quite plain, clear, and comprehensible, and let him score it down the margin—say with a blue pencil—and then taking the marked passages first, let him separate Christ's words from those of the Evangelists by marking Christ's words a second time with, say, a red pencil. Then let him read over these doubly-scored passages several times. Only after he has thoroughly assimilated these, let him again read the words attributed to Christ which he did not understand when he first read them, and let him score, in red, those which have become plain to him. Let him leave unscored the words of Christ which remain quite unintelligible, and also unintelligible words by the writers of the Gospels. The passages marked in red will supply the reader with the essence of Christ's teaching. They will give what all men need and what Christ therefore said in a way that all can understand. The places marked only in blue will give what the authors of the Gospels said that is intelligible.

Very likely in selecting what is fully comprehensible from what is not, people will not all choose the same passages. What is comprehensible to one may seem obscure to another. But all will certainly agree in what is most important, and these are things which will be found quite intelligible to everyone. It is just this—just what is fully comprehensible to all men—that constitutes the essence of Christ's teaching.

[July 22, o.s., 1896.]

## PREFACE TO *THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING*

I LIVED to the age of fifty thinking that the life a man lives from his birth till his death constitutes his whole existence, and that therefore his aim should be to secure happiness for this mortal life. I tried to secure that happiness, but the longer I lived the more evident it became that such happiness does not and cannot exist. The happiness I sought did not come to me, and what I did attain immediately ceased to be happiness as soon as I had attained it. My unhappiness became greater and greater and the inevitability of death more and more apparent, and I understood that in this meaningless and unhappy life nothing awaited me but sufferings, sickness, old age, and destruction. I asked myself: Why is this so? and received no reply. And I came to despair.

What some men said to me and what I myself sometimes tried to believe, namely, that one should not desire happiness for oneself alone but for others—those near to us and all men—did not satisfy me: first because I could not sincerely desire happiness for other people in the way that I did for myself, and secondly and chiefly because those others were doomed to unhappiness and death just as I was, and so all my efforts for their happiness would be in vain.

I came to despair. But I thought that my despair might be the result of my being an exceptional man, and that other men know why they live, and therefore do not despair.

I began to observe other men, but the others did not know why they were living any more than I did.



They tried by the bustle of life to stifle this ignorance; some assured themselves and others that they believed in the different religions that had been instilled into them from childhood—but to believe in what they believed in was impossible, it was too stupid. Yes, and many of them, it seemed to me, only pretended to believe, while in the depth of their souls they did not do so.

I could no longer continue to absorb myself in the bustle of life: no bustle could hide the question that continually presented itself to me, and I was unable to begin to believe afresh in the faith taught me in childhood, which had dropped away from me of itself when my mind had matured. The more I studied, the more I was convinced that truth could not be there—but only hypocrisy and the mercenary aims of those who cheated the people, and the feeble-mindedness, obstinacy and fear, of those who were cheated.

Not to speak of the inner contradictions of that teaching, of its meanness and cruelty in acknowledging a God who punished men with eternal torments,<sup>1</sup> the chief hindrance to my believing it was that I knew that besides this Orthodox Christian teaching which asserts that it alone has the truth, there was also another, a Catholic; a third, Lutheran; and a fourth, the Reformed Church—and all had different Christian teachings while each declared that it alone had the truth. I also knew that in addition to these Christian teachings there are non-Christian religious teachings—Buddhism, Brahmanism, Mohammedanism, Confucianism, and others, which in a quite similar way

<sup>1</sup> All these contradictions, absurdities, and cruelties, have been set out by me in detail in *A Criticism of Dogmatic Theology*, in which all the Church dogmas of the Orthodox theology are examined thesis by thesis.—L. T.

consider that they alone are true and that all the other teachings are delusions.

I could not return to the faith of my childhood, nor could I believe in any of the faiths professed by other nations, for in all of them there were the same contradictions, absurdities, miracles, denials of all other faiths, and above all the same dishonest demand for blind confidence in their teaching.

So I became convinced that I should not find an answer to my question and the alleviation of my sufferings among the existing faiths, and my despair was so great that I contemplated suicide.

But then I came upon my salvation. And this salvation resulted from the fact that from childhood I had retained a dim idea that the Gospels contain a reply to my question. In their teaching—despite the perversions to which it is subjected by the doctrine of the Christian Church—I scented the truth. And I made a last attempt to solve the problem. Putting aside all interpretations, I began to read and study the Gospels and penetrate into their meaning. And the more I penetrated into their meaning the more something new manifested itself to me, quite unlike the teaching of the Christian Church, but which answered my question. And at last that reply became perfectly plain.

And that reply was not merely plain but indubitable, first because it fully coincided with the demands of my heart and my reason, and secondly because when I understood it I saw that it was not my exclusive explanation of the Gospel, as might at first appear, nor was it even an exclusive revelation of Christ's, but that it was the same reply to life's question that has been given more or less clearly by all the best representatives of humanity both before and since the Gospels—beginning with Moses, Isaiah, Confucius, the ancient Greeks,

Buddha, Socrates, and down to Pascal, Spinoza, Fichte, Feuerbach, and those others—often unnoticed and undistinguished men—who without accepting any creed on faith, have sincerely thought and spoken of the meaning of life. So that in the knowledge of truth that I gathered from the Gospels, not only was I not alone, but I was in the company of all the best men of former and present times. And I became assured of this truth and was reassured, and have joyfully lived twenty years of my life since then and am now joyfully approaching my death.

And now I wish to pass on to others that reply as to the meaning of my life, which has given me such full tranquillity and joy.

By my age and the state of my health I am standing with one foot in the grave, and so human considerations have for me no importance. Even if they had, I am well aware that this exposition of my faith would not conduce to my welfare or enhance people's good opinion of me, but on the contrary could only disturb and grieve both unbelievers who demand of me works of art and not discussions of faith, and also the believers who are perturbed by everything I write about religion and scold me for it. Moreover, this writing will in all probability not become known to people till after my death.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore in what I am doing I am prompted not by avarice, desire for fame, or any worldly consideration, but only by fear of failing to fulfil what He who sent me into this world desires of me, and to Whom from hour to hour I await my return.

<sup>1</sup> This remark was made in view of the fact that the publication of what Tolstóy wrote on religion was forbidden in Russia.—A. M.

And so I ask all who may read this to read and understand what I have written, setting aside, as I have done, all worldly considerations, and keeping in view only that eternal source of truth and goodness by Whose will we have come into this world—from which, as corporal beings, we shall very soon disappear—and that they should without haste or irritation consider and understand what I have set down; and if they disagree, should correct me not with contempt and hatred but with compassion and love, and if they agree, should remember that if I speak the truth it is not mine but God's, and that it is only accidentally that a part of it has passed through me just as it passes through each of us when we become conscious of truth and transmit it.

[First published in 1898, though written considerably earlier.]

## A REPLY TO THE SYNOD'S EDICT OF EXCOMMUNICATION, AND TO LET- TERS RECEIVED BY ME CONCERNING IT

'He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all.'—  
COLERIDGE.

**A**T first I did not wish to reply to the Synod's Edict about me, but it has called forth very many letters in which correspondents unknown to me write—some of them scolding me for rejecting things I never rejected, others exhorting me to believe in things I have always believed in, others again expressing an agreement with me which probably does not really exist and a sympathy to which I am hardly entitled. So I have decided to reply both to the Edict itself—indicating what is unjust in it—and to the communications of my unknown correspondents.

The Edict of the Synod has in general many defects. It is either illegal or else intentionally equivocal; it is arbitrary, unfounded, untruthful, and is also libellous, and incites to evil feelings and deeds.

It is illegal or intentionally equivocal; for if it is intended as an Excommunication from the Church, it fails to conform to the Church regulations subject to which Excommunications can be pronounced; while if it is merely an announcement of the fact that one who does not believe in the Church and its dogmas does not belong to the Church—that is self-evident, and the announcement can have no purpose other than to pass for an Excommunica-

tion without really being one, as in fact happened, for that is how the Edict has been understood.

It is arbitrary, for it accuses me alone of disbelief in all the points enumerated in the Edict; whereas many, in fact almost all educated people, share that disbelief and have constantly expressed and still express it both in conversations, in lectures, in pamphlets, and in books.

It is unfounded because it gives as a chief cause of its publication the great circulation of the false teaching wherewith I pervert the people—whereas I am well assured that hardly a hundred people can be found who share my views, and the circulation of my writings on religion, thanks to the Censor, is so insignificant that the majority of those who have read the Synod's Edict have not the least notion of what I may have written about religion—as is shown by the letters I have received.

It contains an obvious falsehood, for it says that efforts have been made by the Church to show me my errors but that these efforts have been unsuccessful. Nothing of the kind ever took place.

It constitutes what in legal terminology is called a libel, for it contains assertions known to be false and tending to my hurt.

It is, finally, an incentive to evil feelings and deeds, for as was to be expected it evoked in unenlightened and unreasoning people anger and hatred against me, culminating in threats of murder expressed in letters I received. One writes: 'Now thou hast been anathematized, and after death wilt go to everlasting torments and wilt perish like a dog . . . anathema upon thee, old devil . . . be damned.' Another blames the Government for not having as yet shut me up in a monastery, and fills his letter with abuse. A third writes: 'If the Government does not get rid of you, we will ourselves make

you shut your mouth,' and the letter ends with curses. 'May you be destroyed—you blackguard!' writes a fourth, 'I shall find means to do it . . .' and then follows indecent abuse. After the publication of the Synod's Edict I also noticed indications of anger of this kind in some of the people I met. On the very day (February 25) when the Edict was made public, while crossing a public square I heard the words: 'See! there goes the devil in human form,' and had the crowd been composed of other elements I should very likely have been beaten to death, as happened some years ago to a man at the Panteléymon Chapel.

So that altogether the Synod's Edict is very bad, and the statement at the end that those who sign it pray that I may become such as they are does not make it any better.

That relates to the Edict as a whole; as to details, it is wrong in the following particulars. It is said in the Edict: 'A writer well known to the world, Russian by birth, Orthodox by baptism and education—Count Tolstóy—under the seduction of his intellectual pride has insolently risen against the Lord and against his Christ and against his holy heritage, and has publicly, in the sight of all men, renounced the Orthodox Mother Church which has reared him and educated him.'

That I have renounced the Church which calls itself Orthodox is perfectly correct.

But I renounced it not because I had risen against the Lord, but on the contrary only because with all the strength of my soul I wished to serve him. Before renouncing the Church, and fellowship with the people which was inexpressibly dear to me, I—having seen some reasons to doubt the Church's integrity—devoted several years to the investigation of its theoretic and practical teachings. For the

theory, I read all I could about Church doctrine and studied and critically analysed dogmatic theology; while as to practice, for more than a year I followed strictly all the injunctions of the Church observing all the fasts and all the services. And I became convinced that Church doctrine is theoretically a crafty and harmful lie, and practically a collection of the grossest superstitions and sorcery, which completely conceals the whole meaning of Christ's teaching.<sup>1</sup>

And I really repudiated the Church, ceased to observe its ceremonies, and wrote a will instructing those near me that when I die they should not allow any servants of the Church to have access to me, but should put away my dead body as quickly as possible without having any incantations or prayers over it, just as one puts away any objectionable and useless object that it may not be an inconvenience to the living.

As to the statements made about me, that I devote the 'literary activity and the talent given to him by God, to disseminating among the people teachings contrary to Christ and to the Church', and that, 'in his works and in letters issued by him

<sup>1</sup> One need only read the Prayer-Book and follow the ritual which is continually performed by the Orthodox priests and is considered a Christian worship of God, to see that all these ceremonies are nothing but different kinds of sorcery adapted to all the incidents of life. That a child in case of death should go to Paradise, one has to know how to oil him and how to immerse him while pronouncing certain words; in order that a mother may cease to be unclean after child-birth, certain incantations have to be pronounced; to be successful in one's affairs, to live comfortably in a new house, that corn may grow well, that a drought may cease, to recover from sickness, to ease the condition in the next world of one who is dying,—for all these and a thousand other incidents there are certain incantations which are pronounced by a priest at a certain place, for a certain consideration.—L. T.



and by his disciples in great quantities over the whole world, but particularly within the limits of our dear fatherland, he preaches with the zeal of a fanatic the overthrow of all the dogmas of the Orthodox Church and the very essence of the Christian faith'—this is not true. I never troubled myself about the propagation of my teaching. It is true that for myself I have expressed in writings my understanding of Christ's teaching and have not hidden these works from those who wished to become acquainted with them, but I never published them myself. Only when they have asked me about it have I told people how I understand Christ's teaching. To those that asked, I said what I thought and (when I had them) gave them my books.

Then it is said that 'he denies God worshipped in the Holy Trinity, the Creator and Protector of the universe; denies our Lord Jesus Christ, God-man, Redeemer and Saviour of the world, who suffered for us men and for our salvation and was raised from the dead; denies the immaculate conception of the Lord Christ as man, and the virginity before his birth and after his birth of the Most Pure Mother of God.' That I deny the incomprehensible Trinity; the fable, which is altogether meaningless in our time, of the fall of the first man; the blasphemous story of a God born of a virgin to redeem the human race—is perfectly true. But God, a Spirit; God, love; the only God—the Source of all—I not only do not deny, but I attribute real existence to God alone and I see the whole meaning of life only in fulfilling His will, which is expressed in the Christian teaching.

It is also said: 'He does not acknowledge a life and retribution beyond the grave.' If one is to understand, by life beyond the grave, the Second Advent,

a hell with eternal torments, devils, and a Paradise of perpetual happiness—it is perfectly true that I do not acknowledge such a life beyond the grave; but eternal life and retribution here and everywhere, now and for ever, I acknowledge to such an extent that, standing now at my age on the verge of my grave, I often have to make an effort to restrain myself from desiring the death of this body—that is, birth to a new life; and I believe every good action increases the true welfare of my eternal life and every evil action decreases it.

It is also stated that I reject all the Sacraments. That is quite true. I consider all the Sacraments to be coarse, degrading sorcery, incompatible with the idea of God or with the Christian teaching, and also as infringements of very plain injunctions in the Gospels. In the Baptism of Infants I see a palpable perversion of the whole meaning which might be attached to the baptism of adults who consciously accepted Christianity; in the performance of the Sacrament of Marriage over those who are known to have had other sexual unions, in the permission of divorce, and in the consecration of the marriages of divorced people, I see a direct infringement both of the meaning and of the words of the Gospel teaching.

In the periodical absolution of sins at Confession I see a harmful deception which only encourages immorality and causes men not to fear to sin.

Both in Extreme Unction and in Anointing I see methods of gross sorcery—as in the worship of icons and relics, and as in all the rites, prayers, and exorcisms which fill the Prayer-Book. In the Sacrament I see a deification of the flesh and a perversion of Christian teaching. In Ordination I see (beside an obvious preparation for deception) a direct infringement of the words of Jesus, which

plainly forbid anyone to be called teacher, father, or master.<sup>1</sup>

It is stated finally, as the last and greatest of my sins, that 'reviling the most sacred objects of the faith of the Orthodox people, he has not shrunk from subjecting to derision the greatest of Sacraments, the Holy Eucharist.'<sup>2</sup> That I did not shrink from describing simply and objectively what the priest does when preparing this so-called Sacrament is perfectly true; but that this so-called Sacrament is anything holy, and that it is blasphemy to describe it simply, just as it is performed, is quite untrue. Blasphemy does not consist in calling a partition a partition, and not an iconostasis,<sup>3</sup> and a cup a cup, and not a chalice, &c.; but it is a most terrible, continual, and revolting blasphemy that men (using all possible means of deception and hypnotization) should assure children and simple-minded folk that if bits of bread are cut up in a particular manner while certain words are pronounced over them, and if they are put into wine,<sup>4</sup> God will enter into those bits of bread, and any

<sup>1</sup> 'But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.'—Matt. xxiii. 8-10.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter xxxix, book i, of *Resurrection*; but see also, as a probable provocative of Tolstóy's Excommunication, the description of the Head of the Holy Synod in chapter xxvii, book ii, of that work.—A. M.

<sup>3</sup> The iconostasis in Russo-Greek churches corresponds somewhat both to the Western altar-rails and to a rood-screen.—A. M.

<sup>4</sup> In the Greek Church the priest mixes the sacramental bread with the wine before administering it to the communicant. The reader will note in this article allusions to several practices (baptism by immersion, unction, &c.) which do not exist in the Church of England, or are differently carried out.—A. M.

living person named by the priest when he takes out one of these sops will be healthy, and any dead person named by the priest when he takes out one of these sops will be better off in the other world on that account, and that into the man who eats such a sop God himself will enter.

Surely that is terrible!

They undertake to teach us to understand the personality of Christ, but his teaching—which destroys evil in the world and blesses men so simply, easily, and undoubtedly, if only they do not pervert it—is all hidden, is all transformed into a gross sorcery of washings, smearing with oil, gestures, exorcisms, eating of bits of bread, &c., so that of the true teaching nothing remains. And if at any time some one tries to remind men that Christ's teaching consists not in this sorcery, not in public prayer, liturgies, candles, and icons, but in loving one another, in not returning evil for evil, in not judging or killing one another—the anger of those to whom deception is profitable is aroused, and with incomprehensible audacity they publicly declare in churches, and print in books, newspapers and catechisms, that Jesus never forbade oaths (swearing allegiance or swearing in courts of law), never forbade murder (executions and wars), and that the teaching of non-resistance to evil has with Satanic ingenuity been invented by the enemies of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

What is most terrible is that people to whom it is profitable not only deceive adults, but (having power to do so) deceive children also—those very children concerning whom Jesus pronounced woe on him who deceives them. It is terrible that these people for their own petty advantage do such fearful evil, hiding from men the truth Jesus revealed, and that gives blessing a thousandfold greater than

<sup>1</sup> Speech by Ambrosius, Bishop of Khárkov.—L. T.

the gains these men obtain for themselves. They behave like a robber who kills a whole family of five or six people to carry off an old coat and tenpence in money. They would willingly have given him all their clothes and all their money not to be killed, but he could not act otherwise.

So it is with the religious deceivers. It would be worth while keeping them ten times better and letting them live in the greatest luxury, if only they would refrain from ruining men by their deceptions. But they cannot act differently. That is what is awful. And therefore we not only may, but should, unmask their deceptions. If there be a sacred thing, it is surely not what they call Sacraments, but just this very duty of unmasking their religious deceptions when one detects them.

When a Tchouvásh smears his idol with sour cream or beats it, I can refrain from insulting his faith and can pass it by with equanimity, for he does these things in the name of a superstition of his own, foreign to me, and he does not interfere with what to me is holy. But I cannot endure it passively when with their barbarous superstitions, men (however numerous, however ancient their superstitions, and however powerful they may be) preach gross sorcery in the name of the God by whom I live, and of that teaching of Christ's which has given life to me and is capable of giving life to all men.

And if I call what they are doing by its name, I only do my duty and what I cannot refrain from doing because I believe in God and in the Christian teaching. If they call the exposure of their imposture 'blasphemy', that only shows the strength of their deception, and should increase the efforts to destroy this deception, made by those who believe in God and in Christ's teaching, and who see that this deception hides the true God from men's sight.

They should say of Christ—who drove bulls and sheep and dealers from the temple—that he blasphemed. Were he to come now and see what is done in his name in church, he would surely with yet greater and most just anger throw out all these horrible altar-cloths,<sup>1</sup> lances, crosses, cups and candles and icons and all the things wherewith the priests—carrying on their sorcery—hide God and his truth from mankind.

So that is what is true and what is untrue in the Synod's Edict about me. I certainly do not believe in what they say they believe in. But I believe in what they wish to persuade people that I disbelieve in.

I believe in this: I believe in God, whom I understand as Spirit, as Love, as the Source of all. I believe that he is in me and I in him. I believe that the will of God is most clearly and intelligibly expressed in the teaching of the man Jesus, whom to consider as God and pray to, I esteem the greatest blasphemy. I believe that man's true welfare lies in fulfilling God's will, and his will is that men should love one another and should consequently do to others as they wish others to do to them—of which it is said in the Gospels that in this is the law and the prophets. I believe therefore that the meaning of the life of every man is to be found only in increasing the love that is in him; that this increase of love leads man, even in this life, to ever greater and greater blessedness, and after death gives him the more blessedness the more love he has, and helps more than anything else towards the establishment

<sup>1</sup> The altar-cloths referred to are those containing fragments of holy relics, on which alone mass can be celebrated. The 'lances' are diminutive ones with which the priest cuts bits out of the holy bread, in remembrance of the lance that pierced Christ's side.—A. M.

of the Kingdom of God on earth: that is, to the establishment of an order of life in which the discord, deception, and violence that now rule will be replaced by free accord, by truth, and by the brotherly love of one for another. I believe that to obtain progress in love there is only one means: prayer—not public prayer in churches, plainly forbidden by Jesus,<sup>1</sup> but private prayer, like the sample given us by Jesus, consisting of the renewing and strengthening in our own consciousness of the meaning of our life and of our complete dependence on the will of God.

Whether or not these beliefs of mine offend, grieve, or prove a stumbling-block to anyone, or hinder anything, or give displeasure to anybody, I can as little change them as I can change my body. I must myself live my own life and I must myself alone meet death (and that very soon), and therefore I cannot believe otherwise than as I—preparing to go to that God from whom I came—do believe. I do not believe my faith to be the one indubitable truth for all time, but I see no other that is plainer, clearer, or answers better to all the demands of my reason and my heart; should I find such a one I shall at once accept it, for God requires nothing but the truth. But I can no more return to that from which with such suffering I have escaped, than a

<sup>1</sup> 'And when thou prayest, thou shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father,' &c.—Matt. vi. 5-13.

flying bird can re-enter the eggshell from which it has emerged.

'He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself (his own peace) better than all,' said Coleridge.

I travelled the contrary way. I began by loving my Orthodox faith more than my peace, then I loved Christianity more than my Church, and now I love truth more than anything in the world. And up to now truth for me corresponds with Christianity as I understand it. And I hold to this Christianity, and to the degree in which I hold to it I live peacefully and happily, and peacefully and happily approach death.

[April 4, O.S., 1901.]



## WHAT IS RELIGION, AND WHEREIN LIES ITS ESSENCE?

### I

**I**N all human societies at certain periods of their existence, a time has come when religion has first swerved from its original purpose, then, diverging more and more, has lost sight of that purpose, and finally has petrified into fixed forms so that its influence on men's lives has become ever less and less.

At such times the educated minority cease to believe in the established religious teaching, and only pretend to hold it because they think it necessary to do so in order to keep the mass of the people to the established order of life; but the mass of the people, though by inertia they keep to the established forms of religion, no longer guide their lives by its demands but guide them only by custom and by the State laws.

That is what has repeatedly occurred in various human societies. But what is now happening in our Christian society has never happened before. It has never before happened that the rich, ruling, and more educated minority, which has most influence on the masses, has not only disbelieved the existing religion, but been convinced that no religion at all is any longer needed, and instead of influencing those who are doubtful of the truth of the generally professed religion to accept some religious teaching more rational and clear than the prevalent one, has influenced them to regard religion in general as a thing that has outlived its day and is now not merely a useless, but even a harmful, social organ, like the vermiform appendix in the human body.

Religion is regarded by such men not as some-

thing known to us by inward experience, but as an external phenomenon—a disease, as it were, which overtakes certain people and which we can only investigate by its external symptoms.

Religion, in the opinion of some of these men, arose from attributing a spirit to various aspects of Nature (animism); in the opinion of others, it arose from the supposed possibility of communicating with deceased ancestors; in the opinion of others again it arose from fear of the forces of Nature. But, say the learned men of our day, since science has now proved that trees and stones cannot be endowed with a spirit, that dead ancestors do not know what is done by the living, and that the aspects of Nature are explainable by natural causes—it follows that the need for religion has passed, as well as the need for all those restrictions with which (in consequence of religious beliefs) people have hitherto hampered themselves. In the opinion of these learned men there was a period of ignorance: the religious period. That has long been outlived by humanity, though some occasional atavistic indications of it still remain. Then came the metaphysical period, which is now also outlived. But we enlightened people are living in a scientific period: a period of positive science which replaces religion and will bring humanity to a height of development it could never have reached while subject to the superstitious teachings of religion.

Early in 1901 the distinguished French savant Berthelot delivered a speech<sup>1</sup> in which he told his hearers that the day of religion has passed and religion must now be replaced by science. I refer to this speech because it is the first to my hand and because it was delivered in the metropolis of the educated world by a universally recognized savant.

<sup>1</sup> See the *Revue de Paris*, January, 1901.—L. T.

But the same thought is continually and ubiquitously expressed in every form, from philosophic treatises down to newspaper feuilletons.

M. Berthelot says in that speech that there were formerly two motors moving humanity: Force and Religion; but that these motors have now become superfluous, for in their place we have *science*. By *science* M. Berthelot (like all devotees of science) evidently means a science embracing the whole range of things man knows, harmoniously united, co-ordinated, and in command of such methods that the data it obtains are unquestionably true. But as no such science really exists—and what is now called science consists of a collection of haphazard, disconnected scraps of knowledge, many of them quite useless, and such as instead of supplying undoubted truth very frequently supply the grossest delusions, exhibited as truth to-day but refuted to-morrow—it is evident that the thing M. Berthelot thinks must replace religion is something non-existent. Consequently the assertion made by M. Berthelot and by those who agree with him, to the effect that science will replace religion, is quite arbitrary and rests on a quite unjustifiable faith in the infallibility of science—a faith similar to the belief in an infallible Church.

Yet men who are said to be educated, and who consider themselves so, are quite convinced that a science already exists which should and can replace religion and which has even already replaced it.

‘Religion is obsolete: belief in anything but science is ignorance. Science will arrange all that is needful and one must be guided in life by science alone.’ This is what is thought and said both by scientists themselves and also by those men of the crowd who, though far from scientific, believe in the scientists and join them in asserting that religion is

an obsolete superstition and that we must be guided in life by science only: that is, in reality, by nothing at all, for science by reason of its very aim (which is to study all that exists) can afford no guidance for the life of man.

## II

The learned men of our times have decided that religion is not wanted, and that science will replace it or has already done so; but the fact remains that, now as formerly, no human society and no rational man has existed or can exist without a religion. I use the term *rational* man because an irrational man may live, as the beasts do, without a religion. But a rational man cannot live without one, for only religion gives a rational man the guidance he needs, telling him what he should do and what first and what next. A rational man cannot live without religion precisely because reason is characteristic of his nature. Every animal is guided in its actions (apart from those to which it is impelled by the need to satisfy its immediate desires) by a consideration of the direct results of its actions. Having considered those results by such means of comprehension as it possesses, an animal makes its actions conform to those consequences and it always unhesitatingly acts in one and the same way in accord with those considerations. A bee, for instance, flies for honey and stores it in the hive because in winter it will need food for itself and for the young, and beyond these considerations it knows and can know nothing. So also a bird is influenced when it builds its nest or migrates from the north to the south and back again. Every animal acts in a like way when it does anything not resulting from direct, immediate necessity, but prompted by considerations of anticipated results.

With man however it is not so. The difference between a man and an animal lies in the fact that the perceptive capacities possessed by an animal are limited to what we call instinct, whereas man's fundamental perceptive capacity is reason. A bee collecting honey can have no doubts as to whether it is good or bad to collect honey, but a man gathering in his corn or fruit cannot but consider whether he is diminishing the prospects of obtaining future harvests and whether he is not depriving his neighbour of food. Nor can he help wondering what the children whom he now feeds will grow up like—and much else. The most important questions of conduct in life cannot be solved conclusively by a reasonable man, just because there is such a superabundance of possible consequences which he cannot but be aware of. Every rational man knows, or at least feels, that in the most important questions of life he can guide himself neither by personal impulses nor by considerations of the immediate consequences of his activity—for the consequences he foresees are too numerous and too various and are often contradictory one to another, being as likely to prove harmful as beneficial to himself and to other people. There is a legend which tells of an angel who descended to earth and, entering the house of a devout family, slew a child in its cradle; when asked why he did so, he explained that the child would have become the greatest of malefactors and would have destroyed the happiness of the family. But it is thus not only with the question, Which human lives are useful, useless, or harmful? A reasonable man cannot decide any of the most important questions of life by considerations of their immediate results and consequences. A reasonable man cannot be satisfied with the considerations that guide the actions of an animal. A man may regard

himself as an animal among animals—living for the passing day; or he may consider himself as a member of a family, a society, or a nation, living for centuries; or he may and even must (for reason irresistibly prompts him to this) consider himself as part of the whole infinite universe existing eternally. And therefore reasonable men should do, and always have done, in reference to the infinitely small affairs of life affecting their actions, what in mathematics is called *integrate*: that is to say, they must set up, besides their relation to the immediate facts of life, a relation to the whole immense Infinite in time and space conceived as one whole. And such establishment of man's relation to that whole of which he feels himself to be a part, from which he draws guidance for his actions, is what has been called and is called Religion. And therefore religion always has been, and cannot cease to be, a necessary and indispensable condition of the life of a reasonable man and of all reasonable humanity.

### III

That is how religion has always been understood by men who were not devoid of the highest (that is, religious) consciousness, which distinguishes man from the beasts. The word religion itself comes either from *relegere*, *religens*, revering the Gods; or, as has been commonly supposed, from *religare*, to bind (in obligation to the higher powers). The oldest and most common definition of religion is that *religion is the link between man and God*. '*Les obligations de l'homme envers Dieu: voilà la religion*' (Man's obligations to God: that is religion) says Vauvenargues.<sup>1</sup> A similar meaning is given to religion by

<sup>1</sup> Luc de Clapiers, Marquis de Vauvenargues (1715-1747), author of *Introduction à la Connaissance de l'Esprit humain*, and of *Réflexions* and *Maximes*.—A. M.

Schleiermacher<sup>1</sup> and by Feuerbach,<sup>2</sup> who acknowledge the basis of religion to be man's consciousness of his dependence on God. '*La religion est une affaire entre chaque homme et Dieu*' (Religion is a matter between each man and God).—Bayle.<sup>3</sup> '*La religion est le résultat des besoins de l'âme et des effets de l'intelligence*' (Religion is the outcome of the needs of the soul and of the effects of intelligence).—B. Constant.<sup>4</sup> '*Religion is a particular means by which man realizes his relation with the superhuman and mysterious forces on which he considers himself dependent.*'—Goblet d'Alviella.<sup>5</sup> '*Religion is a definition of human life, based on the connexion between the human soul and that mysterious spirit whose dominion over the world and over himself man recognizes, and with which he feels himself united.*'—A. Réville.<sup>6</sup>

So that the essence of religion has always been understood—and is now understood by men not deprived of the highest human characteristic—to be the establishment by man of a relation between himself and the infinite Being or Beings whose power he feels over him. And this relation—however different it may be for different nations and at different times—has always defined for men their destiny in the world; from which guidance for their conduct has naturally flowed. A Jew understood

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich E. D. Schleiermacher (1768–1834), author of *Der Christliche Glaube* and many other theological works.—A. M.

<sup>2</sup> L. A. Feuerbach (1804–1872), author of *Das Wesen des Christenthums* (which was translated into English by George Eliot).—A. M.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), author of the *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, which exercised a great influence during the eighteenth century, especially on the Continent.—A. M.

<sup>4</sup> Henri Benjamin Constant de Rebeque (1767–1830), politician, and author of *De la Religion*.—A. M.

<sup>5</sup> Eugène Goblet, Comte d'Alviella (1846– ), author of *Evolution religieuse contemporaine* and other works.—A. M.

<sup>6</sup> A. Réville (1826–1906), Protestant theologian of the advanced school, author of many works on religion.—A. M.

his relation to the Infinite to be that he was a member of a nation chosen by God from among all nations, and that he had therefore to observe in the sight of God the agreement made by God with his people. A Greek understood his relation to be that, being dependent on the representatives of eternity—i.e. on the Gods—he ought to do what pleased them. A Brahman understands himself to be a manifestation of the infinite Brahma, and considers that he ought, by renunciation of life, to strive towards union with that highest being. A Buddhist considered, and considers, his relation to the Infinite to be that, passing from one form of life to another, he inevitably suffers, and these sufferings proceed from passions and desires, and therefore his business is to strive to annihilate all passions and all desires and so pass into Nirvana. Every religion is the setting up between man and the infinite life to which he feels himself allied, of some relation from which he obtains guidance for his conduct. And therefore if a religion does not establish any relation between man and the Infinite (as, for instance, is the case with idolatry or sorcery), then it is not a real religion but only a degeneration. If even religion establishes some relation between man and God but does this by means of assertions not accordant with reason and present-day knowledge, so that one cannot really believe the assertions—that also is not a religion but only a counterfeit. If a religion does not unite the life of a man with the infinite life, again it is not a religion. Nor does a belief in propositions from which no definite direction for human activity results constitute a religion.

*True religion is a relation, accordant with reason and knowledge, which man establishes with the infinite life surrounding him, and it is such as binds his life to that infinity and guides his conduct.*



## IV

Though there never was an age when, or a place where, men lived without a religion, yet the learned men of to-day say, like Molière's 'Involuntary Doctor' who asserted that the liver is on the left side: *Nous avons changé tout cela* (We have changed all that); and they think that we can and should live without any religion. But religion, nevertheless, remains what it has been in the past: the chief motor and heart of human societies; and without it, as without a heart, human life is impossible. There have been and are many different religions—for the expression of man's relation to the Infinite and to God or the Gods differs at different times and in different places according to the stages of development of different nations—but never in any society of men, since men first became rational creatures, could they live, or have they lived, without a religion.

It is true that there have been, and sometimes are, periods in the life of nations when the existing religion has been so perverted and has lagged so far behind life as to cease to guide it. But this cessation of its action on men's lives (occurring at times in all religions) has been but temporary. It is characteristic of religion—as of all that is really alive—that it is born, develops, grows old, dies and again comes to life, and comes to life ever in forms more perfect than before. After a period of higher development in religion a period of decrepitude and lifelessness always follows, usually to be succeeded in its turn by a period of regeneration and the establishment of a religious doctrine wiser and clearer than before. Such periods of development, decrepitude, and regeneration have occurred in all religions. In the profound religion of Brahmanism, as soon as it

began to grow old and to petrify into fixed and coarse forms not suited to its fundamental meaning, came on one side a renascence of Brahmanism itself, and on the other the lofty teachings of Buddhism, which advanced humanity's comprehension of its relation to the Infinite. A similar decline occurred in the Greek and Roman religions and then, following the lowest depths of that decline, appeared Christianity. The same thing occurred again with Church-Christianity, which in Byzantium degenerated into idolatry and polytheism. To counter-balance this perverted Christianity there arose on one hand the Paulicians,<sup>1</sup> and on the other (in opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity and to Mariolatry) came strict Mohammedanism with its fundamental dogma of One God. The same thing happened again with Papal Medieval Christianity, which evoked the Reformation; so that periods when religion weakens in its influence on the majority of men are a necessary condition of the life and development of all religious teachings. This occurs because every religious teaching in its true meaning, however crude it may be, always establishes a relation between man and the Infinite, which is alike for all men. Every religion regards men as equally insignificant compared to Infinity; and therefore every religion contains the conception of the equality of all men before that which it regards as God: whether that be lightning, wind, a tree, an animal, a hero, or a deceased king (or even a living one, as occurred in Rome). So that the admission of the equality of man is an inevitable and fundamental characteristic of every religion.

<sup>1</sup> The Paulicians were a sect who played a great part in the history of the Eastern Church (seventh to twelfth centuries). They rejected the Church view of Christ's teaching and were cruelly persecuted —A. M.

But as equality among men never has existed anywhere in actual life and does not now exist, it has happened that as soon as a new religious teaching appeared (always including a confession of equality among all men)<sup>1</sup> then at once those people for whom inequality was profitable tried to hide this essential feature by perverting the teaching itself. This has always happened wherever a new religious teaching has appeared. And it has been done for the most part not consciously, but merely because those to whom inequality was profitable—the rulers and the rich—in order to feel themselves justified by the teaching without having to alter their position, have tried by all means to attach to the religious teaching an interpretation sanctioning inequality. And naturally a religion so perverted that those who lorded it over others could consider themselves justified in so doing—when passed on to the common people instilled in them also the idea that submission to those who exercise authority is demanded by the religion they profess.

## V

All human activity is evoked by three motive causes: Feeling, Reason, and Suggestion, the last-named being the same thing that doctors call hypnotism. Sometimes man acts only under the influence of feeling—simply striving to get what he desires. Sometimes he acts solely under the influence of reason, which shows him what he ought to do. Sometimes, and most frequently, man acts because he himself or other people have suggested an activity to him, and he unconsciously submits to

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, that all are equal in the sight of God; that human laws and customs should give them an equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and that men should treat one another as brothers.—A. M.

the suggestion. Under normal conditions of life all three influences play their part in prompting a man's activity. Feeling draws him towards a certain activity; reason judges of this activity in the light of present circumstances, as well as by past experience and future expectation; and suggestion, apart from feeling and reason, causes a man to carry out the actions evoked by feeling and approved by reason. Were there no feeling man would undertake nothing; if reason did not exist, man would yield at once to many contradictory feelings, harmful to himself and to others; were there no capacity of yielding to one's own or other people's suggestion, man would have unceasingly to experience the feeling that prompted him to a particular activity and keep his reason continually intent on the verification of the expediency of that feeling. And therefore all these three influences are indispensable for even the simplest human activity. If a man walks from one place to another, this occurs because feeling has impelled him to move from one place to another, reason has approved of this intention and dictated means for its accomplishment (in this case—stepping along a certain road), and the muscles of the body obey and the man moves along the road indicated. While he is going along, both his feeling and his reason are freed for other activity, which could not be the case but for his capacity to submit to suggestion. This is what happens with all human activities and, among the rest, with the most important of them—religious activity. Feeling evokes the need to establish a man's relation to God; reason defines that relation; and suggestion impels man to the activity flowing from that relation. But this is so only as long as religion remains unperverted. As soon as perversion commences, the part played by suggestion

grows ever stronger and stronger and the activity of feeling and of reason weakens. The methods of suggestion are always and everywhere the same. They consist in taking advantage of man at times when he is most susceptible to suggestion (during childhood, and at important occurrences of life: deaths, births, or marriages), and then acting on him by means of art: architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and dramatic performances, and while he is in a condition of receptivity (comparable to that produced on individuals by semi-hypnotization), instilling into him whatever the suggestors wish.

This process may be observed in all ancient religions: in the lofty religion of Brahmanism degenerating into gross idolatry of multitudinous images in various temples accompanied by singing and the smoke of incense; in the ancient Hebrew religion preached by the prophets, changing into a worship of God in a gorgeous temple with ostentatious songs and processions; in the lofty religion of Buddhism, transforming itself—with its monasteries and images of Buddha and innumerable ostentatious rites—into impenetrable Lamaism; and in Taoism with its sorcery and incantations.

Always in all religious teachings when they began to be perverted, their guardians, having brought men into a state in which their reason acted but feebly, employed every effort to suggest and instil into men whatever they wished them to believe. And in all religions it was found necessary to suggest the same three things, which serve as a basis for all the perversions to which a degenerating religion is exposed. First it is suggested that there are men of a particular kind who alone can act as intermediaries between man and God (or the Gods): secondly that miracles have been and are performed, proving and confirming the truth of what

is told by these intermediaries between man and God; and thirdly that there are certain words—repeated verbally or written in books—which express the unalterable will of God (or of the Gods), and which are therefore sacred and infallible. And as soon as these propositions are accepted under the influence of hypnotism, then also all that the intermediaries between man and God say is also accepted as sacred truth, and the chief aim of the perversion of religion is attained, namely: the concealment of the law of human equality, and even the establishment and assertion of the greatest inequality; the separation into castes, the separation into chosen people and Gentiles, into orthodox and heretics, saints and sinners. This very thing has occurred and is occurring in Christianity: complete inequality among men has been admitted, and they are divided not only (with reference to their comprehension of the teaching) into clerics and laity, but (with reference to social position) into those who have power and those who ought to submit to power—which in accord with the teaching of Paul is acknowledged as having been ordained of God.

## VI

Inequality among men, not only as clergy and laity, but also as rich and poor, masters and slaves, is established by the Church-Christian religion as definitely and glaringly as by other religions. Yet judging by what we know of Christian teaching in its earliest form in the Gospels, it would seem that the chief methods of perversion made use of in other religions had been foreseen, and a clear warning against them had been uttered. Against a priestly caste it was plainly said that no man may be the teacher of another ('Call no man your father—

neither be ye called masters'). Against attributing sanctity to books it was said that the spirit is important but not the letter, that man should not believe in human traditions, and that all the law and the prophets (that is, all the books regarded as sacred writing) amount only to this, that we should do to others as we wish them to do to us. If nothing is said against miracles, and if in the Gospels themselves miracles are described which Jesus is supposed to have performed, it is nevertheless evident from the whole spirit of the teaching that Jesus based the proof of the validity of his doctrine not on miracles but on the merits of the teaching itself. ('If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself.') And, above all, Christianity proclaims the equality of men, no longer merely as a deduction from man's relation to the infinite, but as a basic doctrine of the brotherhood of all men, resulting from their being acknowledged as sons of God.

It seems therefore as though it should have been impossible to pervert Christianity so as to destroy the consciousness of equality among men. But the human mind is subtle, and (perhaps unconsciously or semi-consciously) a quite new dodge was devised to make inoperative the warnings contained in the Gospels and this plain pronouncement of equality among men. This dodge consisted in attributing infallibility not only to certain writings but also to a certain set of men called The Church, who have a right to hand on this infallibility to people they themselves select.

A slight addition to the Gospels was invented, telling how Christ, when about to go up into the sky, handed over to certain men the exclusive right—not merely to teach others divine truth (accord-

ing to the literal text of the Gospel he bequeathed at the same time the right, not generally utilized, of being invulnerable by snakes, or poisons)<sup>1</sup>—but also to decide which people should be saved or the reverse, and, above all, to confer this power on others. And the result was that as soon as this idea of a Church was firmly established, all the Gospel warnings hindering the perversion of Christ's teaching became inoperative, for the Church was superior both to reason and to the writings esteemed sacred. Reason was acknowledged to be the source of errors, and the Gospels were explained not as common sense demanded but as suited those who constituted the Church.

And so all the three former methods of perverting religion—a priesthood, miracles, and the infallibility of scriptures—were admitted in full force into Christianity. Intermediaries between God and man were admitted because the need and fitness of having such intermediaries was recognized by the Church; the validity of miracles was acknowledged because the infallible Church testified to them; and the sanctity of the Bible was acknowledged because it was acknowledged by the Church.

And Christianity was perverted as all other religions had been, but with this difference, that just because Christianity most clearly proclaimed its fundamental principle—the equality of all men as sons of God—it was necessary most forcibly to pervert its whole teaching in order to hide this fundamental principle. And by the help of this conception of a Church this has been done to a greater extent than in any other religion. So that

<sup>1</sup> 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel. . . . And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name . . . they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.'—Mark xvi. 15-18.



really no religion has ever preached things so immoral or so evidently incompatible with reason and with contemporary knowledge, as the doctrines preached by Church-Christianity. Not to speak of all the absurdities of the Old Testament, such as the creation of light before the sun, the creation of the world six thousand years ago, the housing of all the animals in the Ark; or of the many immoral horrors, such as injunctions to massacre children and whole populations at God's command; not to speak even of the absurd Sacrament of which Voltaire used to say that, though there have been and are many absurd religious doctrines, there never before was one in which the chief act of religion consisted in eating one's own God,—not to dwell on all that, what can be more absurd than that the Mother of God was both a mother and a Virgin; that the sky opened and a voice spoke from up there; that Christ flew into the sky and sits somewhere up there at the right hand of his father; or that God is both One and Three, not three Gods like Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, but One and yet Three? And what can be more immoral than the terrible doctrine that an angry and revengeful God punishes all men for Adam's sin, and sent his son on earth to save them, knowing beforehand that men would kill him and would therefore be damned; and that salvation from sin consists in being baptized, or in believing that all these things really happened, and that the son of God was killed by men that men might be saved, and that God will punish with eternal torments those who do not believe this?

So that, leaving aside things some people consider as additions to the chief dogmas of this religion—things such as various relics, icons of various Mothers of God,<sup>1</sup> prayers asking for favours and

<sup>1</sup> The wonder-working icons of the Kazán, Iberian, and

addressed to saints each of whom has his own speciality—and not to speak also of the Protestant doctrine of predestination—the very foundations of this religion, admitted by all and formulated in the Nicene Creed, are so absurd and immoral and run so counter to right feeling and to common sense, that men cannot believe in them. Men may repeat any form of words with their lips, but they cannot believe things that have no meaning. It is possible to say with one's lips: 'I believe the world was created six thousand years ago'; or, 'I believe Christ flew up into the sky and sat down next to his Father'; or, 'God is One and at the same time Three'—but no one can believe these things, for the words have no sense. And therefore men of our modern world who profess this perverted form of Christianity really believe in nothing at all.

And that is the peculiar characteristic of our time.

## VII

People in our time do not believe in anything, yet, using a false definition of faith which they take from the *Epistle to the Hebrews* (wrongly ascribed to Paul), they imagine they have faith. Faith according to that definition is 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' (Heb. xi. 1). But—not to mention the fact that faith cannot be a 'substance', since it is a mental condition and not an objective reality—faith is also not 'the evidence of things not seen', for the 'evidence' referred to in the Epistle, as the context shows, is simply credulity, and credulity and faith are two different things.<sup>1</sup>

many other 'Mothers of God', are all paintings of Mary the mother of Jesus, to which various miraculous powers were attributed in Russia.—A. M.

<sup>1</sup> What is fundamental in the above argument is, that the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* defines faith without indicating that it relates man to God *rationally* and *supplies*

Faith is neither hope nor credulity, but a special state of the soul. Faith is man's consciousness that his position in the world is such as obliges him to do certain things. Man acts in accord with his faith not because, as is said in our Russian Catechism, he believes in the unseen as in the seen, nor because he hopes to attain his expectation, but only because having defined his position in the universe he naturally acts according to that position. An agriculturist cultivates the land, and a navigator sets out to sea, not because, as the Catechism says, they believe in the unseen or hope to receive a reward for their activity (such hope exists, but it is not what guides them), but because they consider that activity to be their calling. So also a religiously believing man acts in a certain way, not because he believes in the unseen or expects a reward for his activity, but because, having understood his position in the universe, he naturally acts in accord with that position. If a man has decided that his position in society is that of a labourer, an artisan, an official, or a merchant, then he considers it necessary to work; and as a labourer, an artisan, an official, or a merchant, he does his work. Just so do men in general, who one way or other have defined their position in the world, necessarily and naturally act in accord with that definition (which sometimes is rather a dim consciousness than a definition). Thus, for instance, a man having defined his position in the world as that of a member of a nation chosen by

*guidance for conduct*; while in Tolstóy's apprehension these are just the essential characteristics of faith, as of religion. The paragraph has been altered in this edition because, as Tolstóy first wrote it, it was aimed chiefly against the Russian and Slavonic versions of Hebrews xi. 1, and was therefore perplexing to English readers. It has now been worded to fit the English authorized version, and can with equal ease be worded to fit the Greek text.—A. M.

God, which in order to enjoy God's protection must fulfil His demands, will live in such a way as to fulfil those demands; another man, having defined his position on the supposition that he has passed and is passing through various forms of existence and that on his actions more or less depends his better or worse future, will be guided in life by that definition; and the conduct of a third man, who has defined his position as that of a chance combination of atoms in which a consciousness has been temporarily kindled which must be extinguished for ever, will differ from that of the two first.

The conduct of these men will be quite different because they have defined their positions differently—that is to say, they have different faiths. Faith is the same thing as religion, only with this difference: that by the word *religion* we imply something observed outside us, while what we call *faith* is the same thing, only experienced by man within himself. Faith is a relation man is conscious of towards the infinite universe, and from this relation the direction of his activity results. And therefore true faith is never irrational or incompatible with present-day knowledge, and it cannot be its characteristic to be supernatural or absurd, as people suppose, and as was expressed by a Father of the Church who said: '*Credo quia absurdum*' (I believe because it is absurd). On the contrary, the assertions of true faith, though they cannot be proved, never contain anything contrary to reason or incompatible with human knowledge, but always explain that in life which without the conception supplied by faith would appear irrational and contradictory.

Thus, for instance, an ancient Hebrew believing in a Supreme, Eternal, All-powerful Being who created the universe, the world, the animals, man, &c., and who has promised to patronize His people

if they will keep His Law—did not believe in anything irrational or incompatible with his knowledge, but on the contrary this faith explained to him many things in life which without such a faith would have been inexplicable to him.

In the same way a Hindu who believes that our souls have lived in animals and that according to the good or evil life led they pass into higher or lower animals—by the help of this faith explains to himself many things that without it would be inexplicable to him.

It is the same with a man who considers life an evil, and the aim of life to be peace attainable by the annihilation of desire. He believes in nothing unreasonable, but on the contrary in something that makes his outlook on life more reasonable than it was without that faith.

It is the same with a true Christian who believes that God is the spiritual Father of all men and that the highest human blessedness is attainable by man when he acknowledges his sonship to God and the brotherhood of all mankind.

All these faiths, if they cannot be demonstrated, are in themselves not irrational, but on the contrary give a more rational meaning to occurrences in life which without them seem irrational and contradictory. Moreover all these beliefs, by defining man's position in the universe, inevitably demand conduct in accord with that position. And therefore if a religious teaching asserts irrational propositions which explain nothing but only help to confuse man's understanding of life—then it is not a faith, but only a perversion of faith which has already lost the chief characteristic of true faith and instead of demanding anything from men has become their pliant tool. One of the chief distinctions between true faith and its perversion is that in a perverted

faith man demands that God, in return for sacrifices and prayers, should fulfil his wishes and serve man. But in a true faith man feels that God demands from him the fulfilment of His will: demands that man should serve God.

And just this faith is lacking among the men of our time—they do not even understand what it is like, and by faith they mean, either repeating with their lips what is given to them as the essence of faith, or the performance of ceremonies which, as Church-Christianity teaches, help them to attain their desires.

## VIII

People in our world live without any faith. One part, the educated, wealthy minority, having freed themselves from the Church hypnotism, believe in nothing at all, and look upon every faith as an absurdity or merely as a useful means of keeping the masses in subjection. The immense, poor, uneducated majority—consisting of people who with few exceptions are really sincere—being still under the hypnotism of the Church, think they believe in what is suggested to them as a faith, although it is not really a faith, for instead of elucidating to man his position in the world it only darkens it.

This situation, and the relations of the non-believing, insincere minority to the hypnotized majority, are the conditions which shape the life of our so-called Christian world. And this life—both of the minority which holds in its hands the means of hypnotization, and of the hypnotized majority—is terrible, both on account of the cruelty and immorality of the ruling classes and of the crushed and stupefied condition of the great working masses. Never at any period of religious decline has the

neglect and forgetfulness of the chief characteristic of all religion, and of Christianity in particular—the principle of human equality—fallen to so low a level as it has reached in our time.

A chief cause in our time of the terrible cruelty of man to man—besides the complete absence of religion—is the refined complexity of life which hides from men the consequences of their actions. However cruel the Attilas and Genghis-Khans and their followers may have been, the process of personally killing people face to face must have been unpleasant to them and the consequences of the slaughter must have been still more unpleasant: the lamentations of the kindred of the slain and the presence of the corpses. So that the consequences of their cruelty tended to diminish it. But to-day we kill people by so complex a transmission and the consequences of our cruelty are so carefully removed and hidden from us, that there are no effects tending to restrain cruelty, and the cruelty of one set of men towards another is ever increasing and increasing till it has reached dimensions it never attained before.

I think that nowadays if—I do not say some prominent villain such as Nero, but—some most ordinary man of business wished to make a pond of human blood for diseased rich people to bathe in when ordered to do so by their learned medical advisers, he would not be prevented from arranging it if only he observed the accepted and respectable forms: that is, did not use violence to make people shed their blood but got them into such a position that they could not live without shedding it; and if also he engaged priests and scientists: the former to consecrate the new pond as they consecrate cannons, ironclads, prisons, and gallows; and the latter to find proofs of the necessity and justifiability

of such an institution, as they have found proofs of the necessity for wars and brothels.<sup>1</sup>

The fundamental principle of all religion—the equality of men—is so forgotten, neglected, and buried under all sorts of absurd dogmas in the religion now professed, and in science this same inequality (in the theory of the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest) is so acknowledged to be a necessary condition of life—that the destruction of millions of human lives for the convenience of a ruling minority is considered a most usual and necessary event, and is continually going on.

Men of to-day do not know how to express sufficient delight over the splendid, unprecedented, colossal progress achieved by technical science during the nineteenth century.

There is no doubt that never in history was such material progress made in mastering the powers of Nature as during the nineteenth century. But also there is no doubt that never in history was there such an example of immoral life freed from any force restraining man's animal inclinations, as that given by our ever-increasingly bestialized Christian humanity. The material progress achieved in the nineteenth century has really been great; but that progress has been bought, and is being bought, by such neglect of the most elementary demands of morality as humanity never before was guilty of, even in the days of Genghis-Khan, Attila, or Nero.

There is no doubt that the ironclads, railroads, printing-presses, tunnels, phonographs, Röntgen-rays, and so forth, are very good. They are all very good, but what are also good—good, as Ruskin says,

<sup>1</sup> Laws similar to our 'Contagious Diseases Prevention Act' of 1864 (supported by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1866) existed in Russia, as well as a regular system of licensing houses of ill-fame.—A. M.



beyond comparison with anything else—are human lives, such as those of which millions are now mercilessly ruined for the acquisition of ironclads, railways, and tunnels, which instead of beautifying life disfigure it. To this the usual reply is that appliances are already being invented, and will with time be invented, to check such destruction of human life as is now going on—but this is untrue. As long as men do not consider all men their brothers and do not consider human lives the most sacred of all things—on no account to be sacrificed, since to support them is the very first and most immediate of duties—that is, as long as men do not treat each other religiously, they will always ruin one another's lives for the sake of personal advantage. No one will be so silly as to agree to spend thousands of pounds if he can attain the same end by spending a hundred pounds—with a few human lives that are at his disposal thrown in. On the railroad in Chicago about the same number of people are crushed each year. And the owners of the railroads, quite naturally, do not adopt appliances which would prevent these people from being crushed, for they have calculated that the annual payments to the injured and to their families come to less than the interest on the cost of such appliances.

Very possibly these men who ruin human lives for their own profit may be shamed by public opinion or otherwise compelled to provide the appliances. But as long as men are not religious, and do their deeds to be seen of men and not as in the sight of God, they will, after providing appliances in one place to secure people's lives, in other matters again treat human lives as the best material out of which to make a profit.

It is easy to conquer Nature, and to build railways, steamers, museums, and so forth, if one does

not spare human lives. The Egyptian Pharaohs were proud of their pyramids, and we are delighted with them, forgetting the millions of slaves' lives that were sacrificed for their erection. And in the same way we are delighted with our exhibition-places, ironclads, and trans-oceanic cables---forgetting with what we pay for these things. We should not feel proud of all this till it is all done by free men and not by slaves.

Christian nations have conquered and subdued the American Indians, Hindus, and Africans, and are now conquering and subduing the Chinese, and are proud of doing so. But really these conquests and subjugations do not result from the Christian nations being spiritually superior to those conquered, but contrariwise from their being spiritually far inferior to them. Leaving the Hindus and Chinese out of account, even among the Zulus there were, and still are, some sort of obligatory religious rules prescribing certain actions and forbidding others; but among our Christian nations there are none at all. Rome conquered the world just when Rome had freed itself from every religion. The same, only to a greater degree, is the case now with the Christian nations. They are all in one and the same condition of having rejected religion; and, therefore, notwithstanding dissensions among themselves they are all united and form one confederate band of robbers, among whom theft, plunder, depravity, and murder goes on, individually or collectively, without causing the least compunction of conscience, and even with the greatest self-complacency, as occurred the other day in China. Some believe in nothing and are proud of it; others pretend to believe in what they for their own advantage hypnotize the common folk into accepting as a faith; while others again---the great majority,

the common people as a whole—accept as a faith the hypnotic suggestions to which they are subject, and slavishly submit to all that is demanded of them by the dominant and unbelieving hypnotizers.

And what these hypnotizers demand is what Nero and all like him, who have tried in some way to fill the emptiness of their lives, have always demanded: the satisfaction of their insane and superabounding luxury. Luxury is obtained in no other way than by enslaving men, and as soon as there is enslavement, luxury increases, and the increase of luxury inevitably drags after it an increase of slavery, for only people who are cold and hungry and bound down by want, will continue all their lives long doing not what *they* want but what is wanted only for the pleasure of their masters.

## IX

In the sixth chapter of the Book of Genesis there is a profound passage in which the author says that God, before the Flood, having seen that the spirit He had given to men that they might serve Him was used by them only to serve their own desires, became so angry with men that He repented of having created them, and, before entirely destroying them, decided to shorten the life of man to a hundred and twenty years. And the very thing that then, according to the Bible, so provoked God's anger that it caused Him to shorten man's life, is again going on among the people of our Christian world.

Reason is the power which enables men to define their relation to the universe, and as all men stand in one and the same relation to the universe it follows that religion—which is the elucidation of

that relation—unites men. And union among men affords them the highest attainable welfare both physical and spiritual.

Complete union with the highest and most perfect reason, and therefore complete welfare, is the ideal towards which humanity strives; and all religions unite people by supplying identical answers to all men of any given society when they ask what the universe is and what its inhabitants are; and by uniting them it brings them nearer to the attainment of welfare. But when reason diverging from its natural function (that of determining man's relation to God, and what his activity should be conformably to that relation), is used in the service of the flesh and for angry strife with other men and other fellow creatures, and when it is even used to justify this evil life, so contrary to man's nature and to the purpose for which he is intended—then those terrible calamities result under which the majority of men are now suffering, and a state is reached that makes any return to a reasonable and good life seem almost impossible.

Pagans united by the crudest religious teaching are far nearer the recognition of truth than the pseudo-Christian nations of our day who live without any religion, and among whom the most advanced people are themselves convinced—and suggest to others—that religion is unnecessary and that it is much better to live without any.

Among the pagans men may be found who, recognizing the inconsistency of their faith with their increasing knowledge and with the demands of their reason, produce or adopt a new religion more in accord with the spiritual condition of their nation and acceptable to their compatriots and co-believers. But men of our world—some of whom regard religion as an instrument wherewith to keep

common folk in subjection, while others consider all religion absurd, and yet others (the great majority of the nation), while living under the hypnotism of a gross deception think they possess true religion—become impervious to any forward movement and incapable of any approach towards truth.

Proud of their improvements in things that relate to the bodily life, as well as of their refined, idle reasonings (in which they aim not only at justifying themselves, but also at proving their superiority to any other people of any age of history), they petrify in ignorance and immorality while feeling fully assured that they stand on an elevation never before reached by humanity, and that every step forward along the path of ignorance and immorality raises them to yet greater heights of enlightenment and progress.

## X

Man naturally wishes to bring his bodily (physical) and his rational (spiritual) activity into conformity. He cannot be at peace until he has reached that conformity in one way or other. But it is attainable in two different ways. One way is for a man to decide by the use of his reason on the necessity or desirability of a certain action or actions and then to behave accordingly; the other way is for a man to commit actions under the influence of his feelings, and then to invent intellectual explanations or justifications for what he has done.

The first method of making one's actions conform to one's reason is characteristic of men who have some religion and on the basis of its precepts decide what they ought and what they ought not to do. The second method is generally characteristic of men who are not religious and have no

general standard by which to judge the quality of actions, and who therefore always set up a conformity between their reason and their actions, not by subjecting the latter to their reason, but (after acting under the sway of feeling) by using reason to justify what they have done.

A religious man—knowing what is good and what is bad in his own activity and in that of others and knowing also why one thing is good and another is bad—when he sees a contradiction between the demands of reason and his own or other men's actions, will employ the whole force of his reason to find means to destroy these contradictions by learning how best to bring his actions into agreement with the demands of his reason. But a man without religion—who has no standard whereby to judge the quality of actions apart from the pleasure they afford him—yielding to the sway of his feelings (which are most various and often contradictory), involuntarily falls into contradictions, and having fallen into contradictions tries to solve or hide them by arguments more or less elaborate and clever but always untruthful. And therefore while the reasoning of truly religious men is always simple, direct, and truthful, the mental activity of men who lack religion becomes particularly subtle, complex, and insincere.

I will take the most common example: that of a man who is addicted to vice—that is, is not chaste, not faithful to his wife, or being unmarried indulges in vice. If he is a religious man he knows that this is wrong, and all the efforts of his reason are directed to finding means to free himself from his vice: avoiding intercourse with adulterers and adulteresses, increasing the amount of his work, arranging a strict life for himself, not allowing himself to look on a woman as on an object of desire,

and so forth. And all this is very simple and everyone can understand it. But if the incontinent man is not religious, he at once begins to devise all sorts of explanations to prove that falling in love with women is very good. And then we get all sorts of most complex, cunning, and subtle considerations about the affinity of souls, about beauty, about the freedom of love, and so on; and the more these spread the more they darken the question and hide the essential truth.

Among those who lack religion the same thing happens in all spheres of activity and of thought. To hide underlying contradictions, complex, subtle disquisitions are piled up which, by filling the mind with all sorts of unnecessary rubbish, divert men's attention from what is important and essential, and make it possible for them to petrify in the deceit in which, without noticing it, the people of our world are living.

'Men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil,' says the Gospel. 'For every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprovèd.'

And therefore the men of our world, having, in consequence of their lack of religion, arranged a most cruel, animal, and immoral life, have also brought their complex, subtle, unprofitable activity of mind—hiding the evil of this kind of life—to such a degree of unnecessary intricacy and confusion that the majority of them have quite lost the capacity to distinguish good from evil or false from true.

There is not a single question the men of our world can approach directly and simply: all questions—economic, national, political (whether home or foreign), diplomatic or scientific, not to mention questions of philosophy and religion—are presented

so artificially and incorrectly and are swathed in such thick shrouds of complex, unnecessary disputations—such subtle perversions of meanings and words, such sophistries and disputes—that all arguments about such questions revolve on one spot, connected with nothing, and like driving-wheels without a connecting strap, effect nothing except the one object for which they were produced: to hide from oneself and from others the evil in which men live and the evil they commit.

## XI

In every domain of what is now called science one and the same feature is encountered baffling the mental efforts men direct to the investigation of various domains of knowledge. This feature is that all these scientific investigations evade the essential question calling for an answer, and examine side-issues the investigation of which brings one to no definite result but becomes more intricate the farther one advances. Nor can this be otherwise in a science which selects the objects of its investigation haphazard and not according to the demands of a religious conception of life defining what should be studied and why, what first and what afterwards. For instance, in the now fashionable subjects of Sociology and Political Economy it would seem that there is really only one question: 'How is it, and why is it, that some people do nothing while others are working for them?' (If there is another question: 'Why do people work separately, hindering one another, and not together in common as would be more profitable?' that question is included in the first. For were there no inequality there would be no strife.) It would seem that there ought to be only that one question, but science does not even



think of propounding and replying to it but commences its discussions from afar off and conducts them so that its conclusions can never either solve or assist the solution of the fundamental problem. Discussions are started concerning what used to be and what now is, and the past and the present are regarded as something as unalterable as the course of the stars in the heavens, and abstract conceptions are devised—value, capital, profit, and interest—and a complex play of wits (which has now already continued for a hundred years) results among the disputants. In reality the question can be settled very easily and simply.

Its solution lies in the fact that as all men are brothers and equals, each should act towards others as he wishes them to act towards him; and therefore the whole matter depends on the destruction of a false religious law and the restoration of the true religious law. The advanced people of Christendom, however, not only refuse to accept that solution, but on the contrary try to hide from men the possibility of such a solution, and therefore devote themselves to the idle play of intelligence which they call science.

The same thing takes place in the domain of Jurisprudence. There would seem to be only one essential question: 'How is it that there are men who allow themselves to perpetrate violence on others, to fleece them, confine them, execute them, send them to the wars, and so on?' The solution of that question is very simple if it be examined from the only point of view suitable to the subject—the religious. From a religious point of view man must not and should not subject his neighbour to violence, and therefore only one thing is needful for the solution of the question—namely, to destroy all superstitions and sophistries which allow of violence, and

to instil into men religious principles clearly excluding the possibility of violence.

But the advanced men, instead of doing this, devote all their wits to the task of hiding from others the possibility and necessity of such a solution. They write mountains of books about all sorts of laws: civil, criminal, police, Church, commercial, &c., and expound and dispute about these—fully assured that they are doing something not only useful but very important. To the question, 'Why, among men who are naturally equal, may some judge, coerce, fleece, and execute others?'—they give no reply, and do not even acknowledge the existence of such a question. According to their doctrine this violence is not committed by men but by some abstraction called The State. And similarly, in all realms of knowledge, the learned men of to-day evade and are silent about the essential questions and hide the underlying contradictions.

In the realm of history, the only essential question is: 'How did the workers (who form nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of the whole of humanity) live?' To this question we get nothing like an answer; the question is ignored, while whole mountains of books are written by historians of one school to tell of the stomach-aches of Louis XI, the horrors committed by Elizabeth of England or Iván the Terrible of Russia, of who were their Ministers, and of what verses and comedies were written by literary men to amuse these Kings and their Mistresses and Ministers. Meanwhile the historians of another school tell us in what sort of country a people lived, what they ate, what they sold, what clothes they wore—and in general about things that could have no influence on the people's true life, but were results of their religion, which the historians

of this class imagine to be itself a result of the food the people ate and the clothes they wore.

Yet an answer to the question: 'How did the workers live?' cannot be given till we acknowledge religion to be the essential condition of a people's life. And the reply is therefore to be found in the study of the religions believed in by the nations: for these brought them to the position in which they lived.

In the study of Natural History one would think there was little need to darken men's common sense, but even here, following the bent of mind which contemporary science has adopted, instead of giving the most natural replies to the questions: 'What is the world of living things (plants and animals) and how is it subdivided?' an idle, confused, and perfectly useless chatter is started (directed chiefly against the Biblical account of the creation of the world) as to how organisms came into existence—which really one neither needs to know nor can know, for this origin, however we may explain it, always remains hidden from us in endless time and space. But on this theme, theories and refutations and supplementary theories are invented, filling millions of books, the unexpected result arrived at being: That the law of life which man should obey is the struggle for existence.

More than that, in consequence of the absence of any guidance from religious principle, the applied sciences—such as Technology and Medicine—inevitably diverge from their reasonable purpose and take a false direction. Thus Technology is directed not to lightening the toil of the people, but to achieving improvements needed only by the rich and which will therefore yet more widely separate the rich from the poor, the masters from their slaves. If some advantages from these inventions and

improvements—some crumbs—do reach the working classes, this is not at all because they were intended for the people, but only because by their nature they could not be kept from them.

It is the same with medical science, which has advanced in its false direction till it has reached a stage at which only the rich can command it, while from their manner of life and their poverty (and as a result of the fact that the questions relating to the amelioration of the life of the poor have been neglected) the mass of the people can only avail themselves of it under conditions that most clearly show how medical science has diverged from its true purpose.

But this avoidance and perversion of essential questions is most strikingly seen in what is now called Philosophy. There would seem to be one essential question for philosophy to answer: 'What must I do?' And in the philosophy of the Christian nations answers to this question—though combined with very much that is unnecessary and confused, as in the case of Spinoza, Kant (in his *Critique of Practical Reason*), Schopenhauer, and particularly Rousseau—have at any rate been given. But latterly, since Hegel (who taught that whatever exists is reasonable) the question: 'What must we do?' has been pushed into the background and philosophy directs its whole attention to the investigation of things as they are and to making them fit into a prearranged theory. That was the first downward step. The next step, leading human thought to a yet lower level, was the acknowledgement of the law of the struggle for existence as fundamental, merely because that struggle can be observed among plants and animals. Under the influence of that theory it is assumed that the destruction of the weakest is a law which should not

be checked. Finally came the third step, when the semi-sane Nietzsche's puerile efforts at originality, which do not even present anything complete or coherent but are as it were immoral, offhand jottings of utterly baseless thoughts, were accepted by advanced people as the last word of philosophic science. In reply to the question: 'What must we do?' the advice is now plainly offered: 'Live as you please, paying no attention to the lives of others.'

If anyone doubted the terrible state of stupefaction and bestiality to which our Christian humanity has descended—without speaking of the crimes recently committed in South Africa and China, which were defended by priests and accepted as achievements by all the great ones of the earth—the extraordinary success of the writings of Nietzsche would alone suffice to supply an unanswerable proof. Some disjointed writings—aiming most obtrusively at effect—appear, written by a man suffering from megalomania, a bold but limited and abnormal German. Neither by their talent nor validity have these writings any claim on public attention. In the days of Kant, Leibnitz, or Hume, or even fifty years ago, such writings, far from attracting attention, could not even have appeared. But in our days all the so-called educated classes of humanity are delighted with the ravings of Herr Nietzsche; they dispute about him and explain him, and innumerable copies of his works are printed in all languages.

Turgénev humorously says that there are such things as 'reversed platitudes', and that they are often used by people lacking in talent but desirous of attracting attention. Everyone knows for instance that water is wet: but suddenly someone seriously asserts that water is dry—not ice, but

water is dry; and such an opinion, if confidently expressed, attracts attention.

In the same way, the whole world knows that virtue consists in subduing one's passions and in self-renunciation. This is known not by Christians only (with whom Nietzsche imagines he is fighting), but it is an eternal and supreme law which all humanity has recognized—in Brahmanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and in the ancient Persian religion. And suddenly a man appears who announces his discovery that self-renunciation, mildness, meekness, love—are all vices which are ruining humanity (he refers to Christianity, forgetting all the other religions). It is comprehensible that such an assertion should at first perplex people. But after thinking a little and failing to find in his writings any proofs supporting this vague assertion, every rational man ought to reject such books and only be surprised that nowadays there is no nonsense too arrant to find a publisher. With the works of Nietzsche that course has not been adopted. The majority of pseudo-enlightened people seriously discuss the theory of 'Supermen', and acclaim its author as a great philosopher—a successor to Descartes, Leibnitz, and Kant.

And all this has happened because the majority of pseudo-enlightened men of to-day dislike anything reminding them of virtue or of its chief basis: self-renunciation and love—things that restrain and condemn the animal life they lead; and they gladly welcome a doctrine of egotism and cruelty—however poorly, unintelligibly, and disjointedly expressed—which justifies the system of founding one's own happiness and greatness upon the lives of others: the system in which they live.

## XII

Christ reproached the Scribes and Pharisees because they took the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven but neither themselves entered in nor let others enter.

The learned scribes of to-day do the same: they have now taken the keys not of the Kingdom of Heaven but of enlightenment, and neither enter in nor let others enter.

The hierophants, the priests, by all sorts of deception and hypnotism, have instilled into people an idea that Christianity is not a teaching proclaiming the equality of all men and therefore destructive of the whole present system of life; but that on the contrary it supports the existing order of things and bids us differentiate people, like the stars, and regard them as belonging to different orders—acknowledging any existing authority as ordained of God and obeying it absolutely; in fact, suggesting to the oppressed that their position is what God wishes it to be, and that they ought to put up with it meekly and humbly, submitting to their oppressors who need not be meek or humble, but should—as Emperors, Kings, Popes, Bishops, and secular or spiritual magnates of various kinds—correct others by teaching and punishing them, while themselves living in splendour and luxury which it is the duty of those in subjection to supply. And the ruling classes, thanks to this false teaching which they strongly support, rule over the people, obliging them to furnish means of support for their rulers' idleness, luxury, and vices. And the only men who have freed themselves from this hypnotism—the scientific people—those therefore who alone are able to free the people from their oppression, do not do it though they say they wish to; but instead

of doing what might attain that end they do just the opposite, imagining that they thereby serve the people.

One would think these men—even from casually observing what it is that those who hold the masses in subjection are most afraid of—might see what really moves men and what really keeps them down in the places they now occupy, and would direct their whole force to that source of power. They not only do not do this, however, but consider such action quite useless.

It is as if these men did not wish to see the facts. They assiduously and sincerely do all sorts of different things for the people, but do not do the one thing primarily needful; and their activity is like the activity of a man trying to move a train by exerting his muscles, when he need only get on the engine and do what he constantly sees the engine-driver do: move a lever to let steam into the cylinders. That steam is men's religious conception of life. And the advanced men need only notice the eagerness with which those in authority retain control of that motive power—by means of which the rulers lord it over the masses—to understand to what they must direct their efforts in order to free the people from slavery.

What does the Sultan of Turkey guard and to what does he cling for support? And why does the Russian Emperor on arriving at a town go first of all to kiss an icon or the relics of some saint? And why, in spite of all the varnish of culture he so prides himself on, does the German Kaiser in all his speeches—seasonably or unseasonably—speak of God, of Christ, of the sanctity of religion, of oaths, &c.? Simply because they all know that their power rests on the army, and that the army—the very possibility of such a thing as an army existing—rests



on religion. And if wealthy people are generally particularly devout: making a show of believing, going to Church, and observing the Sabbath—it is all done chiefly because an instinct of self-preservation warns them that their exceptionally advantageous position in the community is bound up with the religion they profess.

These people often do not know in what way their privileges rest on religious deception, but their instinct of self-preservation warns them of the weak spot in that on which their power rests, and they first of all defend that place. Within certain limits these people always allow, and have allowed, socialistic and even revolutionary propaganda, but the foundations of religion they never allow to be touched.

And therefore if history and psychology do not suffice to enable the advanced men of to-day—the learned, the Liberals, the Socialists, the Revolutionists and Anarchists—to discover what it is that moves the people, this visible indication should suffice to convince them that the motive power lies not in material conditions but only in religion.

Yet strange to say the learned, advanced people of to-day, who understand and discuss the conditions of life of various nations very acutely, do not see what is so obvious that it strikes one's eye. If these men intentionally leave the people in their religious ignorance for the sake of retaining their own profitable position among the minority, this is a terrible, revolting fraud. Men who act so are the very hypocrites Christ especially denounced—the only people He did in fact denounce—and He denounced them because no monsters or malefactors ever brought so much evil into human life as is brought by these men.

But if they are sincere, the only explanation of so

strange an eclipse of reason is, that just as the masses are hypnotized by a false religion, so also are the pseudo-enlightened men of to-day hypnotized by a false science which has decided that the chief motor-nerve that now as heretofore actuates humanity, has become altogether useless and can be replaced by something else.

### XIII

This delusion or deceit of the scribes—the educated men of our world—is the peculiarity of our times, and in this lies the cause of the miserable condition in which Christian humanity now lives, as well as of the brutalization into which it is sinking deeper and deeper.

It is usual for the advanced, educated classes of our world to assert that the false religious beliefs held by the masses are of no special importance, and that it is not worth while and is unnecessary to struggle against them directly, as was done by Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau and others. Science, they think—that is to say, the disconnected, casual information they disseminate among the people—will of itself attain that end, and man, having learned how many million miles it is from the earth to the sun, and what metals exist in the sun and the stars, will cease to believe in Church doctrines.

This sincere or insincere assertion or assumption covers either a great delusion or a terrible deception. From the very earliest years of childhood—the years most susceptible to suggestion, when those who train children cannot be sufficiently careful what they transmit to them—a child is hypnotized with the absurd, immoral dogmas of so-called Christian religion, irreconcilable with our reason and knowledge. He is taught the dogma of the

Trinity, which healthy reason cannot hold; the coming of one of the three Gods to earth for the salvation of the human race, and his resurrection and his ascent into heaven; is taught to expect a second coming, and punishment in eternal torments for disbelief in these dogmas; also he is taught to pray for what he wants; and many other things. And when all this (incompatible as it is with reason, contemporary knowledge, and man's conscience) is indelibly stamped on the child's impressionable mind, he is left to himself to find his way as he can amid the contradictions which flow from these dogmas he has accepted and assimilated as unquestionable truths. No one tells him how he may or should reconcile these contradictions, or if the theologians do try to reconcile them their attempts only confuse the matter more than before. So little by little the man becomes accustomed to suppose that reason cannot be trusted (and the theologians strongly support this notion) and therefore anything is possible, and that there is no capacity in man by means of which he can himself distinguish good from evil or falsehood from truth, and that in what is most important for him—his actions—he should be guided not by his reason but by what others tell him. It is evident what a terrible perversion of man's spiritual world such an education must produce, reinforced as it is in adult life by all the means of hypnotization which, by the aid of the priests, is continually exercised upon the people.

If a man of strong spirit with great labour and suffering does succeed in freeing himself from the hypnotism in which he has been educated in childhood and held in mature life, the perversion of his mind, produced by the persuasion that he must distrust his own reason, can still not pass without leaving traces—just as in the physical world the

poisoning of an organism with some powerful virus cannot pass without leaving its trace. It is natural for such a man, having freed himself from the hypnotism of this deceit and hating the falsehood from which he has just escaped, to adopt the view advocated by advanced men and to regard every religion as an obstacle in the path along which humanity is progressing. And having adopted that opinion such a man becomes, like his teachers, devoid of principle—that is devoid of conscience, and guided in life merely by his desires. Nor does he condemn himself for this, but considers that it places him on the highest plane of mental development attainable by man.

That is what may happen with men of strong minds. The less strong, though they may be roused to doubts, will never completely free themselves from the deception in which they were brought up, but adopting or inventing various cunningly devised, cloudy theories to justify the absurd dogmas they have accepted, and living in a sphere of doubts, mist, sophistries and self-deception, they will co-operate in the mystification of the masses and oppose their enlightenment.

But the majority of men, having neither the strength nor the opportunity to struggle against the hypnotism exercised over them, will live and die generation after generation, as they now do—deprived of man's highest welfare, which is a truly religious understanding of life—and will remain docile tools of the classes that rule over them and deceive them.

And it is this terrible deception that advanced and learned men consider unimportant and not worth directly attacking. The only explanation of such an assertion, if those who make it are sincere, is that they are themselves under the hypnotism of

a false science; but if they are not sincere then their conduct is explained by the fact that an attack on established beliefs is unprofitable and often dangerous. In any case, one way or another, the assertion that the profession of a false religion does no harm—or though harmful is unimportant—and that one can therefore disseminate enlightenment without destroying religious deception, is quite untrue.

Mankind can be saved from its ills only by being freed both from the hypnotism in which the priests are holding it and from that into which the learned are leading it. To pour anything into a full bottle one must first empty out what it contains. And similarly it is necessary to free men from the deception of their false faith in order that they may be able to adopt a true religion, that is, a correct relation (in accord with the development humanity has attained) towards the Source of all—towards God,—and that from this relation they may obtain guidance for their actions.

#### XIV

‘But is there any true religion? Religions are endlessly various, and we have no right to call one of them true just because it most nearly suits our own taste’—that is what people say who look at the external forms of religion as at some disease from which they feel themselves free but from which other people still suffer. But this is a mistake; religions differ in their external forms but they are all alike in their fundamental principles. And it is just these fundamental principles of all religions which constitute that true religion which alone to-day is natural to all men, and the acceptance of which can alone save men from their calamities.

Mankind has lived long, and just as it has produced and improved its practical inventions

through successive generations, so also it could not fail to produce and improve those spiritual principles which have formed the bases of its life, as well as the rules of conduct that resulted from those principles. If blind men do not see these, that does not prove that they do not exist.

This religion of our times, common to all men, exists not as some sect with all its peculiarities and perversions, but as a religion consisting of those principles which are alike in all the widespread religions known to us and professed by more than nine-tenths of the human race; and that men are not yet completely brutalized is due to the fact that the best men of all nations hold to this religion and profess it, even if unconsciously, and only the hypnotic deception practised on men by the aid of the priests and scientists now hinders men from consciously adopting it.

The principles of this true religion are so natural to men that as soon as they are put before them they are accepted as something quite familiar and self-evident. For us the true religion is Christianity in those of its principles in which it agrees, not with the external forms, but with the basic principles of Brahmanism, Confucianism, Taoism, Hebraism, Buddhism, and even Mohammedanism. And just in the same way, for those who profess Brahmanism, Confucianism, and so on—true religion is that of which the basic principles agree with those of all other religions. And these principles are very simple, intelligible, and clear.

These principles are: that there is a God, the origin of all things; that in man dwells a spark from that Divine Origin, which man can increase or decrease in himself by his way of living; that to increase this divine spark man must suppress his passions and increase love in himself; and that the

practical means to attain this result is to do to others as you would they should do to you. All these principles are common to Brahmanism, Hebraism, Confucianism, and Mohammedanism. (If Buddhism supplies no definition of God, it nevertheless acknowledges That with which man commingles, and into Which he is absorbed when he attains to Nirvana. And That with which man commingles or into Which he is absorbed in Nirvana, is the same Origin that is called God in Hebraism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism.)

'But that is not religion,' is what men of to-day will say who are accustomed to consider that the supernatural, i.e. the unmeaning, is the chief sign of religion. 'That is anything you like: philosophy, ethics, ratiocination—but not religion.' Religion, according to them, must be absurd and unintelligible (*Credo quia absurdum*). Yet it was only from these very principles, or rather in consequence of their being preached as religious doctrines, that—by a long process of perversion—all those absurd miracles and supernatural occurrences were elaborated which are now considered to be the fundamental signs of every religion. To assert that the supernatural and irrational form the essential characteristic of religion is like observing only rotten apples, and then asserting that a flabby bitterness and a harmful effect on the stomach are the prime characteristics of the fruit called Apple.

Religion is the definition of man's relation to the Source of all things and of man's purpose in life which follows from that relation, and it supplies rules of conduct resulting from that purpose. And the universal religion, whose first principles are alike in all the faiths, fully meets the demands of this understanding of religion. It defines the relation of man to God as being that of a part to the whole;

from this relation it deduces man's purpose, which is to increase the divine element in himself; and this purpose involves practical demands on man in accord with the rule, Do to others as you wish them to do to you.

People often doubt, and I myself at one time doubted, whether such an abstract rule as, Do to others as you wish them to do to you, can be as obligatory a rule and guide for action as the simpler rules: to fast, pray, and take communion, &c. But an irrefutable reply to that doubt is supplied, for instance, by the spiritual condition of a Russian peasant who would rather die than spit out the Sacrament onto a manure heap, but who is yet ready to kill his brothers at the command of men.

Why should demands flowing from the rule of doing to others as you wish them to do to you—such, for instance, as not killing one's brother man, not reviling, not committing adultery, not revenging oneself, not taking advantage of the need of one's brethren to satisfy one's own caprice, and many others,—why should not they be instilled as forcibly and become as binding and inviolable as the belief in the sanctity of the Sacraments, or of images, &c., now is to men whose faith is founded more on credulity than on any clear inward consciousness?

## XV

The truths of the religion common to all men of our time are so simple, so intelligible, and so near the heart of each man, that it would seem only necessary for parents, rulers, and teachers to instil into children and adults—instead of the obsolete and absurd doctrines (in which they themselves often do not believe) about Trinities, virgin-mothers, redemptions, Indras, Trimurti, and



Buddhas and Mohammeds who fly away into the sky—those clear and simple truths the metaphysical essence of which is that the spirit of God dwells in man; and the practical rule of which is that man should do to others as he wishes them to do to him—for the whole life of humanity to change. If only—in the same way that it is now instilled into children and confirmed in adults that God sent His son to redeem Adam's sin, and that He established His Church which must be obeyed, as well as rules deduced from these beliefs, telling when and where to pray and make offerings, when to refrain from such and such food, and on what days to abstain from work—if only it were instilled and confirmed that God is a spirit whose manifestation is present in us, the strength of which we can increase by our lives: if only this and all that naturally flows from this were instilled in the same way that quite useless stories of impossible occurrences, and rules of meaningless ceremonies deduced from those stories, are now instilled—then, instead of purposeless strife and discord, we should very soon (without the aid of diplomatists, international law, peace-congresses, political economists, and Socialists in all their various subdivisions) see humanity living a peaceful, united, and happy life guided by the one religion.

But nothing of the kind is done: not only is the deception of false religion not destroyed and the true one not preached, but on the contrary men go farther and farther away from the possibility of accepting the truth.

The chief cause of people not doing what is so possible, natural, and necessary, is that men to-day, in consequence of having lived so long without religion, are so accustomed to establish and defend their existence by violence, by bayonets, bullets, prisons, and gallows, that it seems to them as if such

an arrangement of life were not only normal, but were the only one possible. Not only do those who profit by the existing order think so, but even those who suffer from it are so stupefied by the hypnotism exercised upon them that they also consider violence to be the only means of securing good order in human society. Yet it is just this arrangement and maintenance of the commonweal by violence that does most to hinder people from comprehending the causes of their sufferings and consequently from being able to establish a true order.

The results of it are such as might be produced by a bad or malicious doctor who should drive a malignant eruption inwards, thereby cheating the sick man and making the disease worse and its cure impossible.

To people of the ruling classes who enslave the masses and think and say: '*Après nous le déluge*,'<sup>1</sup> it seems very convenient by means of the army, the priesthood, the soldiers, and the police, as well as by threats of bayonets, bullets, prisons, workhouses, and gallows, to compel the enslaved people to remain in stupefaction and enslavement, and not to hinder the rulers from exploiting them. And the ruling men do this, calling it the maintenance of good order, but there is nothing that so hinders the establishment of a good social order as this does. In reality, far from being the establishment of good order, it is the establishment of evil.

If men of our Christian nations still possessing some remnants of those religious principles which in spite of everything yet live in the people, had not before them the continual example of crime committed by those who have assumed the duty of

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Pompadour's remark, 'After us the deluge.'—A. M.

guarding order and morality among men—the wars, executions, prisons, taxation, sale of intoxicants and of opium—they would never have thought of committing one-hundredth of the evil deeds—the frauds, violence, and murders—which they now commit in full confidence that such deeds are good and natural for men to commit.

The law of human life is such that the only way to improve it, whether for the individual or for a society of men, is by means of inward, moral growth towards perfection. All attempts of men to better their lives by external action—by violence—serve as the most efficacious propaganda and example of evil, and therefore not only do not improve life, but on the contrary increase the evil which, like a snowball, grows larger and larger and removes men more and more from the only possible way of truly bettering their lives.

In proportion as the practice of violence and crime, committed in the name of the law by the guardians of order and morality, becomes more and more frequent and cruel, and is more and more justified by the hypnotism of falsehood presented as religion, men will be more and more confirmed in the belief that the law of their life is not one of love and service to their fellows, but is one demanding that they should strive with and devour one another.

And the more they are confirmed in that thought, which degrades them to the level of the beasts, the harder will it be to shake off the hypnotic trance in which they are living, and to accept as the basis of their life the true religion of our time, common to all humanity.

A vicious circle has been established: the absence of religion makes possible an animal life based on violence; an animal life based on violence makes

emancipation from hypnotism and an adoption of true religion more and more impossible. And therefore men do not do what is natural, possible, and necessary in our times: do not destroy the deception and simulacrum of religion, and do not assimilate and preach the true religion.

## XVI

Is any issue from this enchanted circle possible, and if so, what is it?

At first it seems as if the Governments, which have taken on themselves the duty of guiding the life of the people for their benefit, ought to lead us out of this circle. That is what men who have tried to alter the arrangements of life founded on violence and to replace them by a reasonable arrangement based on mutual service and love, have always supposed. So thought the Christian reformers, and the founders of various theories of European Communism, and so also thought the celebrated Chinese reformer Mo Ti,<sup>1</sup> who for the welfare of the people proposed to the Government not to teach school-children military sciences and exercises, or give rewards to adults for military achievements, but to teach both children and adults the rules of esteem and love, and give rewards and encouragement for feats of love. So also thought, and think, many religious peasant-reformers, of whom I have known and now know several, beginning with Sutáev and ending with an old man who has now five times presented a petition to the Emperor, asking him to decree the abrogation of false religion and to order that true Christianity be preached.

<sup>1</sup> Mo Tî (or Mîh Teih) lived a little before Mencius (about 372-289 B.C.) who wrote against the former's doctrine of universal love.—A. M.

It seems to men natural that the Government—which justifies its existence on the score of its care for the welfare of the people—must, to secure that welfare, wish to use the only means which can never do people any harm and can only produce the most fruitful results. Government however has not only never taken upon itself this duty, but on the contrary has always and everywhere maintained with the greatest jealousy any false, effete religion prevalent at the period, and has in every way persecuted those who have tried to inform the people of the principles of true religion. In reality this cannot be otherwise; for if Governments were to expose the falsity of the present religions and to preach the true one, it would be as if a man were to cut down the branch on which he is sitting.

But if Government will not do this work it would seem certain that those learned men who having freed themselves from the deception of false religion say they wish to serve the common people whose labour has provided for their education and support, are bound to do it. But these men, like the Government, do not do it: first, because they consider it inexpedient to risk unpleasantness and to suffer the danger of persecution at the hands of the ruling classes for exposing a fraud which Government protects and which in their opinion will disappear of itself; secondly, because, considering all religion to be an effete error, they have nothing to offer the people in place of the deception they are expected to destroy.

There remain those great masses of unlearned men who are under the hypnotic influence of Church and Government deception, and who therefore believe that the simulacrum of religion which has been instilled into them is the one true religion and that there is and can be no other.

These masses are under a constant and intense hypnotic influence. Generation after generation they are born and live and die in the stupefied condition in which they are kept by the clergy and the Government; and if they free themselves from that influence they are sure to fall into the school of the scientists who deny religion—when their influence becomes as useless and harmful as the influence of their teachers.

So that for some men the work is unprofitable, while for others it is impossible.

## XVII

It looks as if no issue were possible.

And indeed for irreligious men there is not, and cannot be, any issue from this position; those who belong to the higher, governing classes, even if they pretend to be concerned for the welfare of the masses, will never (guided by worldly aims, they can never) seriously attempt to destroy the stupefaction and servitude in which these masses live, and which make it possible for the upper classes to rule over them. In the same way, men belonging to the enslaved masses cannot, while guided by worldly motives, wish to make their own hard position harder by entering on a struggle against the upper classes to expose a false teaching and to preach a true one. Neither of these sets of men has any motive to do this, and if they are intelligent they will never attempt it.

But it is otherwise for religious people: men such as those who—however perverted a society may be—are always to be found guarding with their lives the sacred fire of religion without which human life could not exist. There are times (and our time is such) when these men are unnoticed, when—as among us in Russia—despised and derided by all,

their lives pass unrecorded; in exile, in prisons, and in penal battalions. Yet they live, and on them depends the rational life of humanity. And it is just these religious men—however few they may be—who alone can and will rend asunder that enchanted circle which keeps men bound. They can do it, because all the disadvantages and dangers which hinder a worldly man from opposing the existing order of society not only do not impede a religious man, but rather increase his zeal in the struggle against falsehood, and impel him to confess by word and deed what he holds to be divine truth. If he belongs to the ruling classes he will not only not wish to hide the truth out of regard for his own advantageous position, but on the contrary, having come to hate such advantages he will exert his whole strength to free himself from them and to preach the truth, for he will no longer have any other aim in life than to serve God. If he belongs to the enslaved, then in the same way, unbiased by the wish, common among those of his position, to improve the conditions of his physical life, such a man will have no aim but to fulfil the will of God by exposing falsehood and confessing truth; and no suffering or threats will make him cease to live in accord with that purpose which he has recognized in his life. They will both act thus, as naturally as a worldly man exerts himself and puts up with privations to obtain riches or to please a ruler from whom he expects to receive advantages. Every religious man acts thus, because a human soul enlightened by religion no longer lives merely by the life of this world, as irreligious people do, but lives an eternal, infinite life, for which suffering and death in this life are as insignificant as are blisters on his hands or weariness of limbs to a ploughman when he is ploughing a field.

These are the men who will rend asunder the enchanted circle in which people are now confined. However few such men there may be, however humble their social position, however poor in education or ability, as surely as fire lights the dry steppe, so surely will these people set the whole world aflame and kindle all the hearts of men, withered by long lack of religion and now thirsting for a renewal of life.

Religion is not a belief, settled once for all, in certain supernatural occurrences supposed to have taken place once upon a time, nor in the necessity for certain prayers and ceremonies; nor is it, as the scientists suppose, a survival of the superstitions of ancient ignorance which in our time has no meaning or application to life; but religion is a certain relation of man to eternal life and to God, a relation accordant with reason and contemporary knowledge, and it is the one thing that alone moves humanity forward towards its destined aim.

A wise Hebrew proverb says, 'The soul of man is the lamp of God.' Man is a weak and miserable animal until the light of God burns in his soul. But when that light burns (and it burns only in souls enlightened by religion) man becomes the most powerful being in the world. Nor can this be otherwise, for what then acts in him is no longer *his* strength but the strength of God.

So this is what religion is and in what its essence consists.

[February, 1902.]



## AN APPEAL TO THE CLERGY

### I

**W**HETHER you may be: popes, cardinals, bishops, superintendents, priests, or pastors of whatever Church, forgo for a while your assurance that you—you in particular—are the only true disciples of the God Christ, appointed to preach his one true teaching, and remember that before being popes, cardinals, bishops, superintendents, and the rest, you are first of all men: that is, according to your own teaching, beings sent into this world by God to fulfil His will. Remember this, and ask yourselves what you are doing. Your whole life is devoted to preaching, maintaining, and spreading among men a teaching which you say was revealed to you by God Himself, and is therefore the only one that is true and brings redemption.

In what then does this one true and redeeming doctrine that you preach, consist? To whichever one of the so-called Christian Churches—Roman Catholic, Russo-Greek, Lutheran, or Anglican—you may belong, you acknowledge that your teaching is quite accurately expressed in the articles of belief formulated at the Council of Nicaea sixteen hundred years ago. Those articles of belief are as follows:

*First:* There is a God the father (the first person of a Trinity), who has created the sky and the earth and all the angels who live in the sky.

*Second:* There is an only son of God the father, (the second person of the Trinity) not created but begotten. Through this son the world was made.

*Third:* This son, to save people from sin and death (by which they were all punished for the dis-

obedience of their forefather Adam), came down to the earth, was made flesh by the Holy Ghost and the virgin Mary, and became a man.

*Fourth:* This son was crucified for the sins of men.

*Fifth:* He suffered and was buried, and rose on the third day as had been foretold in Hebrew books.

*Sixth:* Having gone up into the sky, this son seated himself at his father's right side.

*Seventh:* This son of God will in due time come again to the earth to judge the living and the dead.

*Eighth:* There is a Holy Ghost (the third person of the Trinity), who is equal to the father, and who spoke through the prophets.

*Ninth* (held by some of the largest Churches): There is one holy, infallible Church (or, more exactly, the Church to which he belongs who makes the confession is held to be unique, holy, and infallible). This Church consists of all who believe in it, living or dead.

*Tenth* (also for some of the largest Churches): There exists a Sacrament of Baptism, by means of which the power of the Holy Ghost is communicated to those who are baptized.

*Eleventh:* At the second coming of Christ the souls of the dead will re-enter their bodies and these bodies will be immortal; and

*Twelfth:* After the second coming the just will have eternal life in paradise on a new earth under a new sky, the sinners will have eternal life in the torments of hell.

Not to speak of things taught by some of your largest Churches (the Roman Catholic and Russo-Greek Orthodox)—such as the belief in saints, and in the good effects of bowing to their bodily remains and to their representations, as well as to representations of Jesus and the mother of God—the above

twelve points embrace the fundamental positions of that truth which you say has been revealed to you by God Himself for the redemption of man. Some of you preach these doctrines simply as they are expressed, others try to give them an allegorical meaning more or less in accord with present-day knowledge and common sense; but you all alike are bound to confess, and do confess, that these statements are the exact expression of that unique truth which God Himself has revealed to you and which you preach to men for their salvation.

## II

Very well. You have had the one truth capable of saving mankind revealed to you by God Himself. It is natural for men to strive towards truth and when it is clearly presented to them they are always glad to accept it and to be guided by it.

And therefore, to impart this saving truth revealed to you by God Himself, it would seem sufficient to communicate it with reasonable persuasion plainly and simply, verbally and through the Press, to those capable of receiving it.

But how have you preached this truth?

From the time a society calling itself the Church was formed, your predecessors taught this truth chiefly by violence. They laid down the truth and punished those who did not accept it. (Millions and millions of people have been tortured, killed, and burnt for not wishing to accept it.) This method of persecution, which was evidently not suited to its purpose, came in course of time to be less and less employed, and is now used, I think, by the Christian Church only in Russia.

Another means was through external action on people's feelings—by solemnity of setting: with pic-

tures, statues, singing, music, even dramatic performances, and oratorical art. In time this method also began to be less and less used. In Protestant countries—except for the orator's art—it is now but little used (though the Salvation Army, which has devised new methods of external action on the feelings, supplies an exception).

But all the strength of the clergy is now directed to a third and most powerful method, which has always been used and is now with special jealousy retained by the clergy in their own hands. This method is that of instilling Church doctrine into people who are not in a position to judge of what is given them: into quite uneducated working people, for instance, who have no time for thought, and chiefly into children, who accept indiscriminately what is imparted to them and on whose minds it remains permanently impressed.

### III

So that in our day your chief method of imparting to men the truth God has revealed to you, consists in teaching this truth to uneducated adults, and to children who accept everything unquestioningly.

This teaching generally begins with what is called Scripture History, that is to say, with selected passages from the Bible, the Hebrew books of the Old Testament, which according to your teaching are the work of the Holy Ghost and are therefore not only unquestionably true but also holy. From this history your pupil draws his first notions of the world, of the life of man, of good and evil, and of God.

This Scripture History begins with a description of how God, the ever-living, created the sky and the earth six thousand years ago out of nothing; how

He afterwards created beasts, fishes, plants, and finally man: Adam, and Adam's wife who was made of one of Adam's ribs. Then it describes how, fearing lest the man and his wife should eat an apple which had the magic quality of giving knowledge, God forbade them to eat that apple; how, notwithstanding this prohibition, the first people ate the apple and were therefore expelled from Paradise, and how all their descendants were therefore cursed and the earth also, so that since then it has grown weeds. Then the life of Adam's descendants is described: how they became so perverted that God not only drowned them all, but drowned all the animals with them, and left alive only Noah and his family and the animals he took into the ark. Then it describes how God chose Abraham alone of all people, and made an agreement with him; which agreement was that Abraham was to consider God to be God, and as a sign of this was to be circumcised. On His side God undertook to give Abraham a numerous progeny and to patronize him and all his offspring. Then it tells how God, patronizing Abraham and his descendants, performed on their behalf most unnatural actions called miracles, and most terrible cruelties. So that the whole of this history—excepting certain stories, which are sometimes naive (as the visit of God with two angels to Abraham, the marriage of Isaac, and others) and sometimes innocent, but often immoral (as the swindles of God's favourite, Jacob, the cruelties of Samson, and the cunning of Joseph)—the whole of this history, from the plagues Moses called down upon the Egyptians and the murder by an angel of all their firstborn, to the fire that destroyed 250 conspirators, the tumbling into the ground of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the destruction of 14,700 men in a few minutes, the saw-

ing of enemies with saws,<sup>1</sup> the execution by Elijah (who rode up into the sky) of the priests who did not agree with him, and the story of Elisha who cursed the boys that laughed at him so that they were torn in pieces and eaten by two bears—all this history is a series of miraculous occurrences and of terrible crimes, committed by the Hebrew people, by their leaders, and by God Himself.

But your teaching of the history you call sacred is not limited to that. Besides the history of the Old Testament you also impart the New Testament to children and to ignorant people in a way that makes the importance of the New Testament consist not in its moral teaching, not in the Sermon on the Mount, but in the conformity of the Gospels with the stories of the Old Testament, in the fulfilment of prophecies, and in miracles, the movement of a star, songs from the sky, talks with the devil, the turning of water into wine, walking on the water, healings, calling people back to life, and finally the resurrection of Jesus himself and his flying up into the sky.

If all these stories, both from the Old and New Testaments, were taught as a series of fairy-tales, even then hardly any teacher would decide to tell them to children and adults he desired to enlighten. But these tales are imparted to people unable to reason, as though they were the most trustworthy description of the world and its laws, as if they gave the truest information about the lives of those who lived in former times, of what should be considered

<sup>1</sup> Father John of Kronstadt having published an article in which he says that this passage shows Tolstóy's ignorance of the Bible, it may be well here to quote 1 Chron. xx. 3. 'And he brought forth the people that were therein, and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. And thus did David unto all the cities of the children of Ammon.'—A. M.

good and evil, of the existence and nature of God, and of the duties of man.

People talk of harmful books! But is there in Christendom a book that has done more harm to mankind than this terrible book, called 'Scripture History from the Old and New Testaments?'<sup>1</sup> And all the men and women of Christendom have to pass through a course of this Scripture History during their childhood, and this same history is also taught to ignorant adults as the first and most essential foundation of knowledge—as the one eternal truth of God.

#### IV

You cannot introduce a foreign substance into a living organism without the organism suffering, and sometimes perishing, from its efforts to rid itself of this foreign substance. What terrible evil must result then to a man's mind from this rendering of the teaching of the Old and New Testaments—foreign alike to present-day knowledge, to common sense, and to moral feeling—and instilled into him at a time when he is unable to judge, but accepts all that is given him!

For a man into whose mind has been introduced as sacred truth a belief in the creation of the world out of nothing six thousand years ago; in the flood, and Noah's ark which accommodated all the animals; in a Trinity; in Adam's fall; in an immaculate conception; in Christ's miracles, and in salvation for men by the sacrifice of his death—for such a man the demands of reason are no longer obligatory, and he cannot be sure of any truth. If the

<sup>1</sup> The reference here is not to the Old and New Testaments in their entirety (the extreme value of many parts of which Tolstóy did not question), but to a compilation for school use, largely used in place of the Bible.—A. M.

Trinity, and an immaculate conception, and the salvation of mankind by the blood of Jesus, are possible—then anything is possible and the demands of reason are not obligatory.

Drive a wedge between the floor-boards of a granary, and no matter how much grain you may pour into the granary it will not stay there. Just so a head into which the wedge has been driven of a Trinity, or of a God who became man and redeemed the human race by his sufferings and then flew up into the sky, can no longer grasp any reasonable or firm understanding of life.

However much you may put into the granary which has cracks in its floor, all will run out. Whatever you may put into a mind which has accepted nonsense as a matter of faith, nothing will remain in it.

If he values his beliefs, such a man will inevitably, all his life long, either be on his guard (as against something harmful) against all that might enlighten him and destroy his superstitions; or—having once for all assumed (and the preachers of Church doctrine will always encourage him in this) that reason is the source of error—he will repudiate the only light given to man to enable him to find his path of life; or, most terrible of all, he will try by cunning argumentation to demonstrate the reasonableness of what is unreasonable, and worst of all will discard, together with the superstitions that were instilled into him, all consciousness of the necessity for any faith whatever.

In either of these three cases a man into whom meaningless and contradictory assertions have, during childhood, been instilled as religious truth—unless with much effort and suffering he free himself from them—is a man mentally diseased. Such a man, seeing around him the constantly moving and



changing facts of life, cannot without a feeling of desperation watch this movement destroying his conception of life, and cannot but experience (openly or secretly) an unkindly feeling towards those who co-operate in this reasonable progress. Nor can he help being a conscious partisan of obscurity and lies against light and truth.

And such the majority of people in Christendom—deprived from childhood by the inculcation of nonsensical beliefs of the capacity to think clearly and firmly—actually are.

## V

Such is the evil done to man's mind by having it impregnated with Church doctrines. But much worse than this is the moral perversion which that impregnation produces in man's soul. Every man comes into the world with a consciousness of his dependence on a mysterious, all-powerful Source which has given him life and consciousness of his equality with all men, the equality of all men with one another, a desire to love and be loved, and a consciousness of the need of striving towards perfection. But what do you instil into him?

Instead of the mysterious Source of which he thinks with reverence, you tell him of an angry unjust God who executes and torments people.

Instead of the equality of all men which the child and the simple man recognize with all their being, you tell them that not only people, but nations, are unequal; that some of them are loved and others are not loved by God; and that some people are called by God to rule, others to submit.

Instead of that wish to love and to be loved which forms the strongest desire in the soul of every unperverted man, you teach him that the relations between men can only be based on violence, on

threats, on executions; and you tell him that judicial and military murders are committed not only with the sanction of God but at his command.

In place of the need of self-improvement, you tell him that man's salvation lies in belief in the Redemption, and that should he improve himself by his own powers without the aid of prayers, sacraments, and belief in the Redemption, he is guilty of sinful pride, and that for his salvation he must trust not to his own reason but to the commands of the Church, and must do what she decrees.

It is terrible to think of the perversion of thought and feeling produced in the soul of a child or an ignorant adult by such teaching.

## VI

Only to think of the things I know of that have been done in Russia during the sixty years of my conscious life, and are still being done!

In the theological colleges, and among the bishops, learned monks, and missionaries, hair-splitting discussions of intricate theological problems are carried on—they talk of reconciling moral and dogmatic teaching, they dispute about the development or immutability of dogmas, and discuss similar religious subtleties. But to the hundred million populace all that is preached is a belief in the Iberian or Kazán icon of the Mother of God, a belief in relics, in devils, in the redemptive efficacy of having bread blessed and placing candles, and having prayers for the dead, and so on, and not only is this all preached and practised, but the inviolability of these popular superstitions is guarded with particular jealousy from any infringement. A peasant has but to omit to observe the name day of the local saint, or omit to invite to his

house a wonder-working icon when it makes the round of his village, or to work on the Friday before St. Elias's day—and he will be denounced and prosecuted and exiled. Not to speak of sectarians being punished for not observing the ceremonies of the Church, they are tried for even meeting together to read the Gospels and are punished for doing so. And the result of all this activity is that tens of millions of people, including nearly all the peasant women, are not only ignorant of Jesus, but have never even heard who he was or that he existed. This is hard to believe, but it is a fact which anyone can easily verify for himself.

Listen to what is said by the bishops and academicians at their conferences, read their magazines, and you would think that the Russian priesthood preaches a faith which even if it be backward is still a Christian faith, in which the Gospel truths find a place and are taught to the people. But watch the activity of the clergy among the people, and you will see that what is preached and energetically inculcated is simply idolatry: the elevation of icons, the blessing of water, the carrying from house to house of miracle-working icons, the glorification of relics, the wearing of crosses, and so forth; while every attempt to understand the real meaning of Christianity is energetically persecuted.

Within my recollection the Russian labouring classes have to a large extent lost the traits of true Christianity which they formerly possessed, but which are now carefully banished by the clergy.

Among the people there formerly existed (but now only in out-of-the-way districts) Christian legends and proverbs verbally handed down from generation to generation, and these legends—such as the legend of Christ wandering in the guise of a beggar, of the angel who doubted God's mercy,

of the crazy man who danced at a dram-shop; and such sayings as: 'Without God one cannot reach the threshold,' 'God is not in might but in right,' 'Live till eve, live for ever,' &c.—these legends and proverbs formed the spiritual food of the people.

Besides these there were Christian customs: to have pity on a criminal or a tramp, to give of one's last resources to a beggar, and to ask forgiveness of a man who has offended.

All this is now forgotten and discarded. It is now all replaced by learning by rote the Catechism, the triune composition of the Trinity, prayers before lessons, and prayers for teachers and for the Tsar, &c. So within my recollection the people have grown ever coarser and more coarse as to religion.

One part—most of the women—remain as superstitious as they were six hundred years ago, but without that Christian spirit which formerly permeated their lives; the other part, which knows the Catechism by heart, are absolute atheists. And all this is consciously brought about by the clergy.

'But that applies to Russia,' Western Europeans—Catholics and Protestants—will say. But I think that the same, if not worse, is happening in Catholicism, with its prohibition of the Gospels and its Notre-Dames; and in Protestantism, with its holy idleness on the Sabbath day, and its bibliolatry—that is its blind belief in the letter of the Bible. I think, in one form or another, it is the same throughout the quasi-Christian world.

In proof of this it is sufficient to remember the age-old fraud of the flame that kindles in Jerusalem on the day of the Resurrection, and which no one of the Church people exposes; or the faith in the Redemption, which is preached with peculiar energy in the very latest phases of Christian Protestantism.

## VII

But not only is the Church teaching harmful by its irrationality and immorality, it is specially harmful because people professing this teaching, while living without any moral demands to restrain them, feel quite convinced they are living a really Christian life.

People live in insensate luxury, obtaining their wealth by the labour of the humble poor and defending themselves and their riches by policemen, law-courts, and executions—and the clergy, in the name of Christ, approve, sanctify, and bless this way of life, merely advising the rich to allot a small part of what they have stolen to the service of those from whom they continue to steal. (When slavery existed, the clergy always and everywhere justified it and did not consider it inconsistent with Christianity.)

People strive by force of arms, by murder, to attain their covetous aims, personal or public, and the clergy approve and in Christ's name bless preparations for war and war itself, and not only approve but often encourage these things; holding war—that is, murder—not to be contrary to Christianity.

People who believe in such teaching are not merely led by it into an evil way of life, but are fully persuaded that their evil life is a good one which there is no need for them to alter.

Nor is that all: the chief evil of this teaching is that it is so skilfully interwoven with the external forms of Christianity that, while professing it, people think that your doctrine is the one true Christianity, and that there is no other! You have not only diverted from men the spring of living water—were that all, people might still find it—

but you have poisoned it with your teachings so that people cannot find any Christianity but this one poisoned by your interpretations.

The Christianity preached by you is an inoculation of false Christianity resembling the inoculation for small-pox or diphtheria, and has the effect of making those who are inoculated immune to true Christianity.

People having for many generations built their lives on foundations irreconcilable with true Christianity, feel fully persuaded that they are living Christian lives, and are thus unable to return to true Christianity.

### VIII

Thus it is with those who profess your doctrines, but there are others who have emancipated themselves from those doctrines: the so-called unbelievers.

These (though in most cases more moral in their lives than the majority of those who profess Church doctrines) as a result of the spiritual taint to which they were exposed in their childhood have an influence on their neighbours which is even worse than that of those who profess your teachings. They are specially harmful because, having in childhood shared the misfortune of the rest of the inhabitants of Christendom and been trained in the Church frauds, they have so identified Church teachings with Christianity in their own perception, that they now cannot distinguish the one from the other, and in rejecting the false Church teaching throw away with it that true Christian teaching which it has hidden.

These people, detesting the fraud that has caused them so much suffering, preach not only the uselessness but the harmfulness of Christianity, and not of Christianity only but of any religion whatever.

Religion, in their perception, is a remnant of superstition, which may have been of use to people once but now is simply harmful. And so their doctrine is, that the quicker and more completely people free themselves from every trace of religious consciousness, the better it will be.

And preaching this emancipation from all religion, they—including among them most educated and learned men, who therefore have the greatest authority with people searching for the truth—consciously or unconsciously become most harmful preachers of moral laxity.

By suggesting to people that the most important mental characteristic of rational creatures—that of ascertaining their relation to the Source of all things from which alone any firm moral laws can be deduced—is something man has outlived, the deniers of religion involuntarily postulate as the basis of human activity simply self-love and the bodily appetites that flow therefrom.

And among these people sprang up that teaching of egotism, evil, and hatred, which (though it was always present in hidden, latent form in the life-conception of the materialists) at first showed itself timidly, but has latterly been so vividly and deliberately expressed in the doctrines of Nietzsche, and is now spreading so rapidly, evoking the most coarsely animal and cruel instincts in mankind.

So that on the one hand the so-called believers find complete approval of their evil way of life in your teaching which recognizes as compatible with Christianity those actions and conditions which are most contrary to it; while on the other hand unbelievers—arriving at the denial of all religion as a consequence of your teaching—wipe out all distinction between good and evil, preach a doctrine of inequality among men, of egotism, of strife,

and of the oppression of the weak by the strong, and preach this as the highest truth attainable by man.

## IX

You, and you alone, by the teaching you forcibly instil into people, are the cause of this dreadful evil from which they suffer so cruelly.

Most terrible of all is the fact that, while causing this evil, you do not believe the teaching you preach; not only do you not believe all the assertions of which it is composed, but often do not believe a single one of them.

I know that, repeating the celebrated *credo quia absurdum*, many of you think that, in spite of everything, you do believe all that you preach. But the fact that you *say* you believe that God is a Trinity, or that the heavens opened and the voice of God spoke from there, or that Jesus rose up into the heavens and will come from there to judge all mankind in their bodies, does not prove that you really believe that the things mentioned have occurred or will occur. You believe you ought to say that you believe these things happened. But you do not believe them, for the assertions that God is One and Three, that Jesus flew up into the sky and will come back from there to judge those who will rise in their bodies, have for you no meaning. One may utter words that have no sense, but one cannot *believe* what has no sense. It is possible to believe that the souls of the dead will pass into other forms of life, pass into animals, or that the annihilation of the passions or the attainment of love is the destiny of man; or it is possible to believe simply that God has forbidden us to kill men, or even that He forbids us to eat—and many other things may be believed that do not involve self-contradiction: but



one cannot believe that God is at the same time both One and Three, or that heaven—which for us is no longer a thing that exists—opened, and so on.

The people of former ages who framed these dogmas could believe in them, but you can no longer do so. If you say you have faith in them, you say so only because you use the word 'faith' in one sense, and apply to it another. One meaning of the word 'faith' refers to a relation adopted by man towards God, which enables man to define the meaning of his whole life and guides all his conscious actions. Another meaning of the word 'faith' is the credulous acceptance of assertions made by a certain person or persons.

In the first sense the objects of faith—though the definition of man's relation to God and to the world is generally accepted as framed by those who lived previously—are verified and accepted by reason.

But in the second sense the objects of faith are not only accepted independently of reason, but are accepted on the absolute condition that reason is not to be allowed to question what is asserted.

On this double meaning of the word 'faith' is founded that misunderstanding which enables people to say they believe, or have 'faith', in propositions devoid of sense or involving a contradiction in terms. And the fact that you are blindly credulous towards your teachers is no proof that you have faith in what—being senseless and therefore supplying no meaning either to your imagination or your reason—cannot be an object of faith.

The well-known preacher, Père Didon, in the introduction to his *Vie de Jésus-Christ*, announces that he believes, not in some allegorical sense but plainly, without explanations, that Christ, having risen, was carried up into the sky and sits there at the right hand of his father.

An illiterate Samára peasant of my acquaintance, in reply to the question whether he believed in God, simply and firmly replied, as his priest told me: 'No, sinner that I am, I don't believe.' He explained his disbelief in God by saying that one could not live as he was living if one believed in God: 'A man scolds, and grudges help to a beggar, and envies, and over-eats, and drinks strong drinks. Could he do such things if he believed in God?'

Père Didon affirms that he has faith both in God and in the ascension of Jesus, while the Samára peasant says he does not believe in God since he does not obey His commandments.

Père Didon evidently does not even know what faith is, and only says he believes: while the Samára peasant knows what faith is, and though he says he does not believe in God, really believes in Him in the very way that is true faith.

## X

But I know that arguments addressed to the intellect do not persuade—only feeling persuades, and therefore, leaving arguments aside, I appeal to you—whoever you may be: popes, bishops, archdeacons, priests, or what not—I appeal to your feelings and to your conscience.

For you know that what you teach about the creation of the world, about the inspiration of the Bible by God, and much else, is not true; how then can you teach it to little children and to ignorant adults who look to you for true enlightenment?

Ask yourself, with your hand on your heart, do you believe what you preach? If you really ask yourself that question, not before men but before God, remembering the approaching hour of death, you cannot but answer, 'No, I do not believe it.'

You do not believe in the inspiration by God of the whole of those writings which you call sacred: you do not believe all the horrors and wonders of the Old Testament, you do not believe in hell, you do not believe in an immaculate conception, in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, you do not believe in the physical resurrection of the dead and in the triune personality of God—not only do you not believe all the articles of the creed which expresses the essence of your faith, but many of you do not even believe a single one of them.

Disbelief, if but in a single dogma, involves disbelief in the infallibility of the Church which has set up the dogma you do not believe. And if you have not faith in the Church you will not believe in the dogmas she set up.

If you do not believe, if you have any doubts whatever, think what you are doing in preaching as divine, unquestionable truth what you do not yourselves believe, and in preaching it by methods which are exceptional and unfair: methods such as you employ. And do not say you cannot take on yourselves the responsibility of depriving people of intimate union with the great or small number of your co-religionists. That is not fair. By instilling into them your special faith you are doing just what you say you do not wish to do: you are depriving people of their natural union with all mankind, and are confining them within the narrow limits of your single sect, thereby involuntarily and inevitably placing them, if not in a hostile, at least in an alien attitude towards everyone else.

I know that you do not consciously do this terrible thing. I know that you yourselves, for the most part, are entangled, hypnotized, and often so situated that for you to confess the truth would mean to condemn all your former activity, the

activity sometimes of several decades. I know how difficult, just for you with the training you have had, especially with the assurance common among you that you are the infallible successors of the God-Christ—I know how difficult it will be for you to face sober realities and to confess yourselves wandering sinners engaged in one of the worst activities a man can possibly pursue.

I know all the difficulties of your position; but remembering the words of the Gospels you acknowledge as divine—that God rejoices more over one sinner that repenteth than over a hundred righteous persons—I think that for each one of you, whatever his position may be, it should be easier to repent and to cease to take part in what you are doing, than, not believing, to continue to do it.

Whoever you may be: popes, cardinals, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, superintendents, priests, or pastors—think of this.

If you belong to those of the clergy—of whom there are unfortunately in our days very many (and continually more and more)—who see clearly how obsolete, irrational, and immoral is the Church teaching, but who, without believing in it, still from personal motives (for their salaries as priests or bishops) continue to preach it, do not console yourself with the supposition that your activity is justified by any utility it has for the masses of the people who do not yet understand what you understand.

Falsehood cannot be useful to anyone. What you know—that falsehoods are, falsehoods—could be known equally by the common man whom you have indoctrinated and are indoctrinating with them, and he might be free from them. Not only might he, but for you, free himself from these falsehoods—he might find the truth which Christ has

shown and which by your doctrines you—standing between the common man and his God—have hidden away. What you are doing you are doing not to serve man, but only from ambition or covetousness.

Therefore, however magnificent may be the palaces in which you live, the churches in which you officiate and preach, and the vestments in which you adorn yourselves, your occupation is not made better by these things. 'That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.'

So it is with those who, not believing, continue to preach what is false, and to confirm men in it.

But there are also among you those—and their number is continually increasing—who, though they see the bankrupt position of the Church creeds in our day, cannot make up their minds to examine them critically. Belief has been so instilled into them in childhood, and is so strongly supported by their environment and by the influence of the crowd, that (without even trying to free themselves from it) they devote all the strength of their minds and education to justify, by cunning allegories and false and confused reasonings, the incompatibilities and contradictions of the creed they profess.

If you belong to this class of clergy, which though less guilty is even more harmful than the class previously mentioned, do not imagine that your reasonings will quiet your conscience or justify you before God. In the depth of your soul you cannot but know that all you can devise and invent will not make the immoral stories of Scripture history—which are nowadays in opposition to man's knowledge and understanding—or the archaic affirmations of the Nicene Creed, either moral, reasonable, clear, or accordant with contemporary knowledge and common sense.

You know that you cannot by your arguments convince anyone of the truth of your faith, and that no fresh, grown-up, educated man not trained from childhood to your belief, can believe you, but that such a man will either laugh or suppose you to be mentally afflicted, when he hears your account of the creation of the world, of the first man, of Adam's sin, and of the redemption of man by the death of the son of God.

All you can effect by your false, pseudo-scientific argumentations, and (what counts for more) by your authority, will be temporarily to retain in hypnotic submission to a false faith, those who are awakening from its influence and preparing to free themselves from it.

That is what you are doing, and it is a very evil work. Instead of employing your mental powers to free yourselves and others from the fraud you and they are involved in, and which causes you and them to suffer, you use your powers to entangle yourselves and them yet further.

You, the clergy of this class, should not entangle yourselves and others by obscure arguments, should not try to demonstrate that truth is what you call truth; you should on the contrary make an effort, and try to verify the beliefs you have accepted as truth—by comparing them with what you and everyone else accept as sure knowledge, and also by the simple demands of common sense. You need only sincerely set yourselves that task, and you will at once awake from the hypnotic sleep in which you now are, and the terrible delusion in which you have lived will become clear to you.

So it is with this second class, the philosophizing clergy, who in our day are very numerous and most harmful.

But there is also a third class of simple-minded

clergy who have never doubted the truth of the faith they profess and preach, and this class is the most numerous. These men have either never thought about the sense and meaning of the affirmations taught them in their childhood as sacred divine truth, or, if they have thought, were so unaccustomed to independent thinking that they did not see the incompatibilities and contradictions involved in those affirmations, or seeing them were yet so overpowered by the authority of the Church tradition that they did not dare to think otherwise than as former and present ecclesiastics have thought. These men generally console themselves with the thought that Church doctrine probably has some satisfactory explanation of the incompatibilities which (as they suppose) only appear incompatibilities to them owing to their own deficiency in theological erudition.

If you belong to that class of men—sincerely and naïvely believing, or who though they do not believe are yet willing to believe and are oblivious of the obstacles to so doing—whether you are already an ordained priest, or a young man only preparing for the priesthood, pause for a while in your activity, or in your preparations for that activity, and consider what you are doing or are about to do.

You are preaching, or are preparing to preach, a teaching which will define for men the meaning of their life, will define its aim, will indicate the features of good and evil, and will give direction to all their activity. And this teaching you preach not as any other human doctrine—imperfect and open to question—but as a teaching revealed by God Himself and therefore not to be questioned; and you preach it not, in a book or ordinary conversation, but either to children—at an age when they cannot understand the meaning of what is conveyed

to them, and when it all stamps itself indelibly on their consciousness—or you preach it to ignorant adults unable to weigh the instruction you give them.

Such is your activity, or the activity for which you are preparing.

But what if this that you teach or are preparing to teach be untrue?

Is it possible that this cannot be or must not be considered? If you consider it and compare this teaching with other teachings claiming to be equally unique and infallible, and compare it with what you yourselves know and with common sense; if, in a word, you consider it not in a spirit of blind credulity but freely—you cannot fail to see that what has been given to you as sacred truth is not only not sacred truth but is simply an obsolete and superstitious belief, which like other similar beliefs is maintained and preached by men not for the benefit of their brother-men but for some other object. And as soon as you have understood that, all those of you who look on life seriously and attend to the voice of conscience will be unable to continue to preach this doctrine or to prepare to preach it.

## XI

But I hear the usual reply: 'What will become of men if they cease to believe the Church doctrines? Will not things be worse than they now are?'

What will happen if the people of Christendom cease to believe in Church doctrine? The result will be that not the Hebrew legends alone but the religious wisdom of the whole world will become accessible and intelligible to them. People will grow up and develop with unperverted understandings and feelings. Having discarded a teaching



accepted credulously, people will order their relation towards God reasonably, in conformity with their knowledge, and will recognize the moral obligations flowing from that relation.

‘But will not the results be worse?’

If the Church doctrine is not true, how can it be worse for men not to have falsehood preached to them as truth, especially in a way so unfair as is now adopted for the purpose?

‘But,’ some people say, ‘the common folk are coarse and uneducated, and what we educated people do not require may yet be useful and even indispensable for the masses.’

If all men are made alike, then all must travel one and the same path from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge, from falsehood to truth. You have travelled that road and have attained consciousness of the unreliability of the belief in which you were trained. By what right then will you check others from making the same advance?

You say that though you do not need such food it is needed by the masses. But no wise man undertakes to decide what physical food another must eat; how then can it be decided—and who can decide—what spiritual food the masses of the people must have?

The fact that you notice among the people a demand for this doctrine in no way proves that the demand ought to be supplied. A demand for intoxicants and tobacco exists and other yet worse demands. And the fact is that you yourselves by complex methods of hypnotization evoke this very demand by the existence of which you try to justify your own occupation. Only cease to evoke the demand and it will not exist; for, as in your own case so with everyone else, there can be no demand for lies, but all men have moved and still move from

darkness to light, and you who stand nearer to the light should try to make it accessible to others and not to hide it from them.

‘But,’ I hear a last objection, ‘will the result not be worse if we—educated, moral men, who desire to do good to the people—abandon our posts because of the doubts that have arisen in our souls and let our places be taken by coarse, immoral men, indifferent to the people’s good?’

Undoubtedly the abandonment of the clerical profession by the best men will result in the ecclesiastical business passing into coarse, immoral hands, through which it will disintegrate more and more and expose its own falseness and harmfulness. But the result will not be worse, for the disintegration of ecclesiastical establishments is now going on and is one of the means by which people are being liberated from the fraud in which they have been held. And therefore the quicker this emancipation is accomplished by enlightened and good men abandoning the clerical profession, the better it will be. And so the greater the number of enlightened and good men who leave the clerical profession the better.

So from whichever side you look at your activity that activity remains harmful, and therefore all those among you who still fear God and have not quite stifled the voice of conscience, cannot do otherwise than exert all your strength to release yourselves from the false position in which you are placed.

I know that many of you are encumbered with families or are dependent on parents who require you to follow the course you have begun; I know how difficult it is to abandon a post that brings honour or wealth or even gives a competence and enables you and your families to continue a life to

which you are accustomed, and I know how painful it is to go against relations one loves. But anything is better than to do what destroys your own soul and injures your fellow men.

Therefore the sooner and more definitely you repent of your sin and cease your activity, the better it will be not only for others but for yourselves.

That is what I—standing now on the brink of my grave and clearly seeing the chief source of human ills—wished to say to you; and to say it not to expose or condemn you (I know how imperceptibly you were yourselves led into the snare which has made you what you are), but in order to co-operate in the emancipation of men from the terrible evil which the preaching of your doctrine produces by obscuring the truth: and at the same time I wished to help you to rouse yourselves from the hypnotic sleep in which now you often fail to understand all the wickedness of your own actions.

May God, who sees your hearts, help you in the effort.

[November 1, O.S., 1902.]

## THE RESTORATION OF HELL

**T**HIS happened when Jesus was revealing his teaching to men.

His teaching was so clear, so easy to follow, and so evidently saved men from evil, that it seemed impossible that it should not be accepted or that anything could prevent its spreading.

Beelzebub, the father and ruler of all the devils, was alarmed. He clearly saw that his power over men would be for ever ended unless Jesus renounced his teaching. He was alarmed but did not despair, and he incited the Scribes and Pharisees, his obedient servants, to insult and torment Jesus to the utmost of their power and to advise Christ's disciples to flee and abandon him. He hoped that condemnation to a shameful execution, revilings, abandonment by all his disciples, and finally the suffering and execution itself, would cause Christ at the last moment to renounce his teaching, and that such a renunciation would destroy all its power.

The matter was decided on the cross. When Christ exclaimed: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Beelzebub exulted. He seized the fetters prepared for Jesus, tried them on his own legs, and proceeded to adjust them so that when affixed to Jesus they could not be undone.

But suddenly the words were heard from the cross: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And after that Christ cried: 'It is finished!' and gave up the ghost.

Beelzebub understood that all was lost. He wished to free his legs from the fetters and escape, but could not move from the spot. The fetters had become welded on him and bound his own limbs.

He tried to use his wings, but could not unfold them. And Beelzebub saw how Christ appeared at the gates of Hell in a halo of light, and how the sinners, from Adam to Judas, came out, how all the devils fled, and how the very walls of Hell silently collapsed on all four sides. He could endure this no longer and with a piercing shriek fell through the rent floor to the nether regions.

## II

One hundred, two hundred, three hundred years passed.

Beelzebub did not count the time. Around him was black darkness and dead silence. He lay motionless and tried not to think of what had happened, yet he still thought, and impotently hated him who had caused his downfall.

But suddenly—he did not remember or know how many hundred years had elapsed—he heard above him sounds resembling the trampling of feet, groans, cries, and gnashing of teeth.

Beelzebub lifted his head and began to listen.

That Hell could be re-established after Christ's victory was more than he could believe; yet the trampling, the groans, the cries and gnashing of teeth, sounded clearer and clearer.

He raised his body and doubled up his shaggy legs with their overgrown hoofs (to his astonishment the fetters fell off of themselves), and freely flapping his extended wings he gave the whistle by which in former times he had summoned his servants and assistants around him.

Before he had time to draw breath an opening yawned above his head, red flames glared, and a crowd of devils, hustling one another, dropped through the opening into that nether region and

settled around Beelzebub like birds of prey around carrion.

There were large devils and small devils, fat devils and thin devils, devils with long tails and devils with short tails, devils with pointed horns, devils with straight horns, and devils with crooked horns.

A shiny black one, naked except for a cape thrown over his shoulders, with a round hairless face and an enormous hanging paunch, sat on his heels before Beelzebub's very face, and rolling his eyes now up and now down, continued to smile, waving his long thin tail rhythmically from side to side.

### III

'What does that noise mean?' said Beelzebub, pointing upwards. 'What is going on up there?'

'Just what there always used to be,' replied the shiny devil in the cape.

'Are there really some sinners?' asked Beelzebub.

'Many,' replied the shiny one.

'But how about the teaching of him whom I do not wish to name?' asked Beelzebub.

The devil in the cape gave a grin that showed his sharp teeth, while suppressed laughter was heard among all the other devils.

'That teaching doesn't hinder us at all. Men don't believe in it,' said the devil in the cape.

'But it plainly saved them from us, and he sealed it by his death!' said Beelzebub.

'I have altered all that,' said the devil in the cape, rapidly tapping the floor with his tail.

'How have you altered it?'

'I have arranged it so that men do not believe in his teaching but in mine, which they call by his name.'

'How did you do that?' asked Beelzebub.

'It came about of itself. I only helped a bit.'

'Tell me of it briefly,' said Beelzebub.

The devil in the cape lowered his head and was silent awhile as if leisurely considering. Then he began his story:

'When that dreadful thing happened, when Hell was overthrown and our father and ruler left us,' said he, 'I went to the places where that teaching which so nearly ruined us had been preached. I wanted to see how the people lived who fulfilled it, and I saw that those who lived according to that teaching were quite happy and quite beyond our reach. They did not grow angry with one another, did not give way to women's charms, and either did not marry or if they married kept to one wife. They did not own property but held everything in common; they did not defend themselves from any attacks, but returned good for evil. Their life was so good that others were more and more attracted to them. When I saw this I thought that all was lost, and meant to quit. But then something happened, which though insignificant in itself seemed to me to deserve attention, and I remained. Among these people some considered it necessary that they should all be circumcised and that none should eat meat that had been offered to idols; whereas others considered that all this was inessential and that they need not be circumcised and might eat anything. So I began to suggest to both sets of people that this disagreement was very important and that as the matter concerned the service of God neither the one side nor the other should give way. And they believed me, and their disputes became fiercer. On both sides they began to be angry, and then I began to instil into each of them that they might prove the truth of their

teaching by miracles. Evident as it is that miracles cannot prove the truth of a teaching, they were so anxious to be in the right that they believed me, and I arranged miracles for them. It was not difficult to do this. They believed anything that confirmed their desire to prove that they alone were in the right.

'Some said that tongues of fire had descended upon them; others declared that they had seen the risen body of their dead teacher himself, and much else. They kept inventing things that had never happened, and in the name of him who called us liars, lied no less well than we do. The one set said of the other: "Your miracles are not genuine, ours are the only genuine ones." And the others replied. "No, yours are not genuine, but ours are."

'Matters were going well, but I was afraid that they might discern the too-evident deception, so I invented "The Church". And when once they believed in "The Church" I was at peace. I understood that we were saved, and that Hell was restored.'

#### IV

'What is "the Church"?' asked Beelzebub severely, reluctant to believe that his servants were cleverer than he.

'Well, when people tell lies and feel that they won't be believed, they always call God to witness, and say: "By God, what I say is true!" That, in substance, is "the Church", but with this peculiarity, that those who recognize themselves as being "the Church" become convinced that they cannot err, and so whatever nonsense they may utter they can never recant it. The Church is constituted in this way: Men assure themselves and others that their teacher, God, to ensure that the law he



revealed to men should not be misinterpreted, has given power to certain men, who, with those to whom they transfer this power, can alone correctly interpret his teaching. So these men, who call themselves "the Church", regard themselves as holding the truth not because what they preach is true but because they consider themselves the only true successors of the disciples of the disciples of the disciples, and finally of the disciples of the teacher—God—himself. Though this method, like that of the miracles, has the drawback that people may simultaneously assert, each of himself, that they are members of the only true Church (as has indeed always happened), it has the advantage that as soon as men have declared that they are the Church and have built up their teaching on that assertion, they can no longer renounce what they have once said, however absurd it may be, and no matter what other people may say.'

'But why did the Church misinterpret the teaching in our favour?' said Beelzebub.

'They did that'—continued the devil in the cape—'because having pronounced themselves to be the only expositors of God's law and having persuaded others of this, they became the highest arbiters of men's fate and therefore obtained the highest power. And having obtained that power they naturally became proud and for the most part depraved, and in that way excited the indignation and enmity of others against themselves. And for the struggle against their enemies, having no means but violence, they began to persecute, to execute, and to burn, all who would not recognize their authority. Thus their very position obliged them to misinterpret the teaching so as to justify both their bad lives and the cruelties they employed against their enemies. And that is precisely what they did.'

## V

‘But the teaching was so simple and clear,’ said Beelzebub, still reluctant to believe that his servants had done what it had not occurred to him to do, ‘that it was impossible to misinterpret it. “Do unto others as you would that they should do to you!”—how can that be misinterpreted?’

‘Well, by my advice they used various methods,’ replied the devil in the cape. ‘Men have a story about a good magician who to save a man from a wicked wizard turned him into a small grain of wheat; the wicked wizard, having changed himself into a cock, was about to peck this little grain, but the good magician emptied a sack of grain over it. The wicked wizard could not eat up all the grain, and was also unable to find the one grain he wanted. That is what by my advice they did with the teaching of him who taught that all the law consists in doing unto others what we wish them to do to us. They accepted sixty-six different books as being the sacred exposition of the law of God, and declared that every word in those books was the production of God the Holy Ghost. Over the simple and easily understood truth they poured such a heap of pseudo-sacred truths that it became impossible either to accept them all or to find among them the one truth which is alone necessary for man.

‘That was their first method. The second, which they used with success for more than a thousand years, consisted in simply killing and burning anyone who wished to reveal the truth. That method is now going out of use, but they do not altogether abandon it, and though they do not burn those who try to disclose the truth, they so calumniate them and so poison their lives that only a few people venture to expose them.

'That is the second method. The third is that, asserting themselves to be the Church and therefore infallible, they simply teach—when it suits them—the contrary of what is said in the Scriptures, leaving it to their pupils to extract themselves from these contradictions as they please and as they can. So, for instance, it is said in the Scriptures: "Call no man your father on earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters, for one is your master, even Christ." But they say: "We alone are the Fathers, and we alone are the Masters of men." Or again, it is said: "When thou prayest, do so in secret, and God will hear thee," but they teach that men must pray in churches, in company, with singing and music. Further, it is said in the Scriptures: "Swear not at all," but they teach that it is necessary to swear implicit obedience to the authorities whatever they may demand. Or it is said, "Thou shalt not kill," but they teach that we should and must kill, according to law. Or again it is said: "My teaching is spirit and life. Feed upon it as upon bread," whereas they teach that if bits of bread are dipped in wine and certain words are uttered over them<sup>1</sup> these bits of bread become flesh, and the wine becomes blood, and that to eat this bread and drink this wine is very profitable for the salvation of the soul. Men believe this and diligently eat these sops, and afterwards when they fall into our hands they are astonished that the sops have not helped them—' and the devil in the cape, rolling his eyes and turning up his eyeballs, grinned from ear to ear.

'That is excellent,' said Beelzebub, and smiled. And the devils all broke out into loud laughter.

<sup>1</sup> In the Communion Service of the Eastern Church the altar bread is cut up into small pieces, placed in the chalice with the wine, and administered with a spoon.—A. M.

## VI

'Is it possible that things are just as they were before? Are there fornicators, robbers, and murderers?' asked Beelzebub, already quite cheerful.

The devils, cheerful too, now all spoke at once, trying to show off before Beelzebub.

'Not just as they were before, but better than ever!' cried one of them.

'We can't cram all the adulterers into the old sections,' piped another.

'The robbers now are worse than they used to be,' cried a third.

'There is no getting fuel enough ready for the murderers!' roared a fourth.

'Don't all speak at once,' said Beelzebub, 'but let the one answer whom I will question. Who manages adultery? Step out and tell me how you now deal with the pupils of him who forbade men to change their wives, and said that a man should not look at a woman lustfully. Who manages adultery?'

'I do,' replied a womanish, brown devil, with a flabby face and a restless slobbering mouth, and he crawled up to Beelzebub on his haunches.

He crept out in front of the others, crouched down on his heels, bent his head on one side, and wagging his tufted tail twisted it in between his legs and began thus in a sing-song voice:

'We do it both in the old way—already employed by you, our father and ruler, in the Garden of Eden, which gave the whole human race over into our power—and also in a new, ecclesiastical way. In the new ecclesiastical way we persuade people that real marriage consists not in what it actually does consist in—namely, the union of man and woman—but in dressing up in their very best clothes, going into a big building arranged for the

purpose, and there, having placed on their heads hats specially made for the occasion, walking three times round a little table to the sound of various songs.<sup>1</sup> We make people believe that only this is real marriage. And believing this, people naturally consider that every union of man and woman apart from these conditions is a simple pleasure binding them to nothing, or that it is the satisfaction of an hygienic necessity, and therefore they give themselves up unrestrainedly to that pleasure.'

The womanish devil bent his flabby head to the other side and was silent, as if awaiting the effect of his words on Beelzebub.

Beelzebub nodded his head in token of approval, and the womanish devil continued:

'By this method—at the same time not neglecting the former method practised in Eden, of curiosity and forbidden fruit—' he said, evidently wishing to flatter Beelzebub, 'we obtain the very best results. Imagining that they can arrange for themselves an honest Church marriage even after their union with many women, men change hundreds of wives and become so accustomed to profligacy that they go on doing the same even after their Church marriage. And if for some reason any of the demands connected with their Church marriage appear to them irksome, they arrange for the performance of another walk round the little table and the first is considered inoperative.'

The womanish devil ceased, and having wiped his dribbling mouth with the tip of his tail, he bent his head to the other side and silently fixed his eyes on Beelzebub.

<sup>1</sup> This description relates to the wedding service of the Russo-Greek Church, in which placing crowns on the heads of the bride and bridegroom and walking three times round the altar, plays a prominent part.—A. M.

## VII

'Simple and good,' said Beelzebub. 'I quite approve. And who looks after the robbers?'

'I do,' replied a voice, and a big devil with large crooked horns, upturned moustaches, and enormous crooked paws, stepped forward.

This devil, having crawled to the front like the previous one, arranged his moustaches in military fashion with both paws, and waited to be questioned.

'He who destroyed Hell,' said Beelzebub, 'taught men to live like the birds of heaven, and bade men give to him that asks and yield their coat to him who would take their cloak, saying that to be saved, men should have no possessions. How then do you induce men who have heard that to go on robbing?'

'We do it,' said the devil with the moustaches, throwing back his head majestically, 'just as our father and ruler did when Saul was chosen king. Just as was done then, we instil into men the idea that instead of ceasing to rob one another, it is more convenient to allow one man to rob them all, letting him rule over them. The only new thing in our present method is that, to confirm a particular man's right to plunder, we lead him into a church, put a special cap on his head, seat him in a high armchair, put a little stick and a ball in his hand, smear him with vegetable oil, and in the name of God and the son of God proclaim the person of this man who has been smeared with oil to be sacred. Thus the plundering carried on by this personage can in no way be restricted, for he is considered sacred. So these sacred personages and their assistants, and the assistants of their assistants, all plunder the people unceasingly, calmly, and safely. At the same time laws and regulations are generally instituted

which enable an idle minority—even without being anointed—to plunder the working majority with impunity. Indeed in some States now the plundering goes on without any anointed personage at all, just as much as where they exist. As our father and ruler sees, the method we use is practically the old one. What is new is only that we have made this method more general, more secret, more widespread in extent and time, and more stable.

‘We have made the method more general in this way: formerly people voluntarily submitted to whomever they elected, whereas now we have arranged so that quite apart from their wishes they submit not to someone they have chosen, but to anyone who turns up.

‘We have made the method more secret, in that now those who are robbed—thanks to the arrangement of taxation, and especially of indirect taxes—do not see those who rob them.

‘And the method is more widespread in extent because not content with plundering their own people, the so-called Christian nations under various very strange excuses, and especially on the pretext of diffusing the Christian religion, also rob all other nations who have anything worth stealing.

‘In point of time this new method is more extended than the old one thanks to the institution of public and State loans. They now rob not only the present generation but future ones as well.

‘And we have made this method more stable by causing the chief plunderers to be regarded as sacred personages, so that people are afraid to resist them. It is sufficient for the chief plunderer to have had time to get himself smeared with oil, and then he may quietly go on plundering whom he pleases and as much as he wishes. At one time in Russia, as an experiment, I placed on the throne

one after another the most disreputable women, stupid, illiterate, and dissolute, who by their own laws had no right to be there. The last of them was not only a wanton, but a criminal who murdered her husband and also her legal heir. And just because she had been smeared with oil, people did not slit her nostrils or flog her with a whip, as they were wont to do with those who killed their husbands, but slavishly submitted to her for thirty years, letting her and her innumerable lovers plunder their property and even deprive them of their personal liberty. So that in our time open robberies—the taking of a purse, a house, or clothes, by force—are hardly a one-millionth part of all the “legal” robberies which are continually being committed by those in power. In our time unpunished and masked robberies, and in general a readiness to steal, are so established among men that the chief purpose of life for almost everybody is plunder, moderated only by mutual strife among the robbers!

## VIII

‘Well, that is good,’ said Beelzebub. ‘But the murderers? Who looks after them?’

‘I do,’ said a blood-red devil, stepping forward from the crowd. He had sharp horns, fangs protruding from his mouth, and a thick tail which he carried stiffly erect.

‘How do you get men to be murderers when they are followers of him who said: Do not render evil for evil, but love your enemies? How do you make murderers of such men?’

‘We do it in the old way,’ replied the red devil in a deafening, ear-splitting voice, ‘by arousing avarice, discord, hatred, vengeance, and pride. In the same old way we persuade the teachers of men



that the best way to teach men not to murder is for the teachers themselves publicly to murder those who have committed murder. This method does not so much furnish us with murderers as prepare murderers for us. But a greater number have been and still are given us by the new teaching of the infallibility of the Church, of Church marriage, and of Christian equality.

‘The teaching of the infallibility of the Church used to give us the greatest number of murderers. Those who recognized themselves as members of the infallible Church considered it a crime to allow false interpreters of the teaching to pervert people, and therefore considered that to kill such people was an action pleasing to God: and they killed whole populations, and executed and burned hundreds of thousands of people. It is droll to notice that those who were beginning to understand the true teaching—our most dangerous enemies—were regarded as our servants, that is, servants of the devils: while those who executed and burnt them at the stake, and who were actually our obedient servants, regarded themselves as saints fulfilling the will of God.

‘So it was formerly, but now a very large number of murderers are given us by the teaching of Church marriage and by that of equality. The teaching of marriage gives us in the first place the murder of husbands and wives by one another, and in the second place the murder of children by their mothers. Husbands and wives kill each other when certain demands of the law and custom of ecclesiastical marriage seem to them hampering: but mothers kill their children chiefly when the unions from which the children spring are not recognized as marriages. Such murders are of constant occurrence.

'Again, though the murders occasioned by the Church teaching of equality only occur periodically, when they do occur they do so in great quantities. According to that teaching people are led to believe that they are all equals before the law. But the plundered people feel that this is untrue. They see that this equality before the law only amounts to making it convenient for the robbers to continue to rob while making it inconvenient for them to do the same, and they become indignant and attack their plunderers. And then mutual murder begins, which sometimes gives us tens of thousands of murderers at a time.'

## IX

'But murders in war? How do you entice to war the pupils of him who recognized men as the sons of one Father and bade them love their enemies?'

The red devil grinned, emitted a jet of fire and smoke from his mouth, and joyously slapped himself on the back with his thick tail.

'We do it like this: We persuade each nation that it is the very best in the world—"Deutschland *uber alles*,"<sup>1</sup> France, England, Russia "*uber alles*", and that this nation (their name is legion) ought to dominate all the others. And as we instil the same idea into all the nations, they (always feeling themselves in danger from their neighbours) are always preparing to defend themselves and becoming exasperated with one another. But the more one side prepares for defence and on that account gets angry with its neighbour, the more all the others prepare for defence and hate one another. So that now those who accepted the teaching of him who called

<sup>1</sup> This passage had to be omitted from Caspari's edition of Tolstóy's works printed in Berlin.—A. M.

us murderers are chiefly and continually engaged on preparations for murder and on actually murdering.'

## X

'All this is very clever,' said Beelzebub after a long pause. 'But how is it that learned men, free from the deception of the Church teaching, have not seen that the Church has perverted the teaching, and have not reinstated it?'

'They cannot possibly do that,' said a dusky black devil with a flat receding forehead, protruding ears, and feeble limbs, speaking in a self-assured voice as he crawled out in front of the others, wrapped in a mantle.

'Why not?' asked Beelzebub sternly, annoyed by the self-assured tone of the devil in the mantle.

Unabashed by Beelzebub's exclamation the devil in the mantle leisurely sat down, not squatting like the others but crossing his weak legs Eastern fashion, and began to speak without hesitation in a measured voice.

'They cannot do that because I constantly distract their attention from what it is possible and necessary for them to know, and direct it to what it is unnecessary for them to know and what they never will know.'

'How do you do that?'

'I have done it in the past and am still doing it in various ways according to the period,' replied the devil in the mantle. 'Of old I used to teach men that it was most important for them to know particulars about the relations between the persons of the Trinity, about the origin of Jesus Christ and his nature, about the attributes of God, and so forth. And they discussed and argued much and lengthily and quarrelled and grew angry. And

these discussions so absorbed them that they did not think about how they ought to live, and consequently had no need to know what their teacher had said about life.

'Afterwards, when they had become so confused by these discussions that they themselves no longer understood what they were talking about, I persuaded some of them that the most important thing in life was to study and explain everything written by a man called Aristotle, who lived more than a thousand years before in Greece; others I persuaded that the most important thing was to find a stone by means of which they could make gold, and an elixir which could heal all diseases and make men immortal. And to these things the cleverest and most learned of them directed all their mental powers.

'Those who were not interested in this, I persuaded that it is most important to know whether it is the earth that moves round the sun or the sun round the earth. And when they had found out that the earth revolves and not the sun, and had ascertained how many million miles it is from the sun to the earth, they were very glad, and since then till now they investigate the distances between the stars still more ardently, though they know that there can be no end to the number of such distances, the number of stars being itself infinite, and that it is quite unnecessary for them to know it. Besides this, I also persuaded them that it is very necessary to know how all the animals came into existence, and all the worms, and all the plants, and all the infinitesimal creatures. And though this knowledge was also quite unnecessary for them, and quite evidently impossible of attainment—seeing that the number of creatures is as infinite as that of the stars—yet they directed and still direct all their

mental powers to these and similar investigations of material phenomena, and are greatly astonished that the more they find out concerning unnecessary things the more remains unknown. And though it is evident that in proportion as their investigations proceed, the domain of what remains uninvestigated becomes wider and wider and the subjects of investigation become more and more complex and the knowledge they acquire becomes less and less applicable to life, this does not at all perplex them. Fully persuaded of the importance of their occupations they continue to investigate, to preach, to write, to print, and to translate from one language to another, all their investigations and discussions which for the most part are futile, or if occasionally applicable, then only for the pleasure of the rich minority or to aggravate the position of the majority of the poor.

‘To hinder these men from ever again guessing that the one thing necessary for them is the establishment of the law of life indicated in the teaching of Jesus, I impress on them that they cannot know the laws of the spiritual life and that all religious teaching, including the teaching of Jesus, is an error and a superstition, and that they can ascertain how they ought to live from the science I have devised for them called sociology, which consists in studying how former people lived badly. So instead of trying to live better themselves according to the teaching of Jesus, they think they need only study the lives of former people, and that from that they will be able to deduce general laws of life, and that to live well they need only conform their life to the laws they thus devise.

‘In order to confirm them in error still more, I suggest to them something resembling the teaching of the Church, namely, that there exists a certain

succession of knowledge which is called science, and that the assertions of this science are as infallible as the assertions of the Church.

'And as soon as those who are considered the promoters of science become persuaded of their infallibility, they naturally proclaim as indubitable truth things that are not only unnecessary but often absurd, and having proclaimed them they cannot repudiate them.

'That is why I say that as long as I continue to instil into these men respect and veneration for the science I have devised for them, they will never comprehend that teaching which all but destroyed us.'

## XI

'Very good! Thank you,' said Beelzebub, and his face shone. 'You have deserved a reward and I will duly recompense you.'

'But us! You have forgotten us!' exclaimed the rest of the various devils—small, large, bandy-legged, fat, and thin.

'What do you do?' asked Beelzebub.

'I am the devil of technical improvements.'

'I of the division of labour.'

'I of the means of communication.'

'I of book-printing.'

'I of art.'

'I of medicine.'

'I of culture.'

'I of education.'

'I of reforming people.'

'I of intoxication.'

'I of philanthropy.'

'I of socialism.'

'I of women's rights', they shrieked in chorus, crowding forward in front of Beelzebub.

'Speak one at a time and briefly!' commanded Beelzebub. 'You!'—and he turned to the devil of technical improvements—'What do you do?'

'I persuade people that the more things they produce and the faster they produce them the better it will be for them. And men, destroying their lives in order to produce things, make more and more, though they are not needed by those who compel them to be made and are inaccessible to those who do make them.'

'Splendid! Well, and you!' said Beelzebub to the devil of the division of labour.

'I persuade men that as articles can be produced quicker by machines than by men, it is necessary to turn men into machines, and they do this and the men who are turned into machines hate those who have done this to them.'

'Excellent! And you?' said Beelzebub, addressing the devil of the means of communication.

'I persuade men that for their welfare they ought to move from place to place as speedily as possible, and so, instead of each improving his way of life where he is, men spend a large part of their time in moving from place to place. They are very proud that they can go more than thirty-five miles in an hour.'<sup>1</sup>

Beelzebub praised this one also.

The devil of book-printing then stepped forward. His business, as he explained, consisted in communicating to as many people as possible all the nasty and stupid things that are done and written in the world.

The devil of art explained that, under pretext of comforting men and arousing elevated feelings in

<sup>1</sup> When this was written, thirty-five miles an hour was about the speed of a Russian express train, which was their fastest means of communication.—A. M.

them, he pandered to their vices by depicting them in attractive aspects.

The devil of medicine explained that his business was to persuade men that their most important business was the care of their body; and since anxiety about the body has no end, men occupying themselves with its care and aided by medicine, not only forget about the lives of other people but also about their own true life.

The devil of culture explained that he taught people that to make use of all the things superintended by the devils of technical improvement, division of labour, means of communication, book-printing, art, and medicine, is something like a virtue, and that a man who profits by all this may feel quite satisfied with himself and need not try to improve.

The devil of education explained that he persuaded men that while living badly and not even knowing in what a right life consists, they can teach children the right way of living.

The devil of reforming explained that he taught people that though themselves bad they can reform bad people.

The devil of intoxication explained that he taught men that instead of trying to live better in order to escape from the sufferings produced by bad living, it is better to forget themselves under the influence of intoxication by wine, opium, tobacco, or morphia.

The devil of philanthropy said that he rendered men inaccessible to goodness by persuading them that by plundering by the hundredweight and giving back to those they plundered by the ounce, they were charitable and had no need of improvement.

The devil of socialism boasted that he excited class enmity in the name of the highest organization of human life.



The devil of women's rights boasted that—besides class enmity—he aroused enmity between the sexes in the name of a still more perfect arrangement of life.

'I am comfort!' 'I am fashion!' squealed and cried yet other devils, crawling up to Beelzebub.

'Do you really imagine that I am so old and stupid as not to understand that as soon as the teaching of life itself is false, everything that might be harmful to us becomes profitable?' cried Beelzebub with a loud peal of laughter. 'Enough! I thank you all!' And lifting his wings he sprang to his feet.

The devils encircled Beelzebub. At one end as they linked up was the devil in the cape—the inventor of the Church; at the other was the devil in the mantle—the inventor of Science. These two clutched each other's paws and the ring was complete.

Then, chuckling, shrieking, whistling, snorting, and waving and flicking their tails, they all spun and danced round Beelzebub. He himself danced in the middle, spreading and flapping his wings and kicking his legs up high.

From above could be heard cries, groans, and weeping and gnashing of teeth.

## CHURCH AND STATE

**R**ELIGION is the meaning given to life, it is what gives life strength and direction. Every man who lives finds such a meaning and lives by it. If he finds no meaning in life he dies. In this search man avails himself of everything the previous efforts of humanity have attained to. All this that humanity has attained to is called revelation. Revelation is that which helps man to understand life. Such is the relation of man to religion.

What an extraordinary thing it is! There are people who seem ready to climb out of their skins for the sake of making others accept this and not another form of revelation. They cannot rest till others have accepted their own particular form of revelation, and no other. They anathematize, persecute, and kill as many as they can of the dissentients. Other groups of people do the same—they too anathematize, persecute, and kill as many as they can of those who dissent from them. And others again do the same. So that they are all anathematizing, persecuting, and killing—demanding that everyone should believe as they do. And the result is that there are hundreds of sects all anathematizing, persecuting, and killing one another.

At first I was astonished that such an obvious absurdity—such an evident contradiction—did not destroy religion itself. How can religious people remain so deluded?

And really, viewed from a general, external point of view it is incomprehensible, and irrefragably proves that every religion is a fraud and that the whole thing is superstition, as indeed the dominant philosophy of to-day declares. And looking at

things from this general point of view I inevitably came to the conclusion that all religion is a human fraud. But I could not help being checked by the reflection that the very absurdity and obviousness of the fraud, and the fact that all humanity nevertheless yields to it, indicate that it must rest on some basis that is not fraudulent. Otherwise we could not let what is so stupid deceive us. I was forced to acknowledge the importance of the phenomena on which the fraud is based, by the very fact that all those who really live a human life yield to this fraud. And in consequence of this reflection I began to analyse the Christian teaching which supplies the basis of this fraud for all Christendom.

That is what was apparent from the general point of view. But from the individual point of view—which shows us that each man (and I myself) in order to live must always have a religion to show him the meaning of life—the fact that violence is employed in questions of religion is yet more amazing in its absurdity.

Indeed, how can it and why should it concern anyone to make somebody else not merely have the same religion as himself, but also profess it in the same way that he does? A man lives and must therefore know why he lives. He has established his relation to God: he knows the very truth of truths, and I know the very truth of truths. Our expression may differ, the essence must be the same—we are both of us men.

Then why should I—what can induce me 'to—oblige anyone or demand of anyone that he should express his truth absolutely as I express it?

I cannot compel a man to alter his religion either by violence, or by cunning, or by fraud (false miracles).

His religion is his life. How can I take from him his religion and give him another? It is like taking out his heart and putting another in its place. I can only do that if his religion and mine are words and not an essential thing giving life—if it is a wart and not a heart. Then too such a thing is impossible because no man by deception or compulsion can make another man believe what he does not believe; for if a man has adjusted his relation towards God and knows that religion is the relation in which man stands towards God, he cannot desire to define another man's relation to God by means of force or fraud. That is impossible; but yet it is being done and has been done everywhere and always. That is to say, it can never really be done because it is in itself impossible; but something that looks very much like it has been done and is being done. What has been and is being done is that some people impose on others a counterfeit religion, and others accept this counterfeit—this sham religion.

Religion cannot be forced and cannot be accepted for the sake of anything—force, fraud, or profit. Therefore what is so accepted is not religion, but a fraud. And this religious fraud is a long-established condition of man's life.

In what does this fraud consist, and on what is it based? What induces the deceivers to produce it, and what makes it plausible to the deceived? I will not discuss the same phenomena in Brahminism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Mohammedanism, though anyone who has read about those religions may see that the case has been the same in them as in Christianity, but I will speak only of the latter—it being the religion that is known, necessary, and dear to us. In Christianity the whole fraud is built up on the fantastic conception of a 'Church'—a

conception founded on nothing, and which as soon as we begin to study Christianity amazes us by its unexpected and useless absurdity.

Of all the godless ideas and words there is none more godless than that of a Church. There is no idea that has produced more evil, none more inimical to Christ's teaching, than the idea of a Church. In reality the word *ekklesia* means an assembly and nothing more, and it is so used in the Gospels. In the language of all modern nations the word *ekklesia* (or the equivalent word 'Church') means a house of prayer.

Beyond those meanings the word has not progressed in any language—notwithstanding the Church fraud which has persisted for fifteen hundred years. According to the definition given to the word by priests (to whom the Church fraud is necessary) it amounts to nothing else than a preface which says: 'All that I am going to say is true, and if you disbelieve I shall burn you, or denounce you, and do you all manner of harm.' This conception is a sophistry needed for certain dialectical purposes and it has remained the possession of those to whom it is necessary. Among the people, and not only among common people but also in society among educated people, no such conception is held at all—even though it is taught in the catechisms. Strange as it seems to examine this definition one has to do so, because so many people proclaim it seriously as something important, though it is absolutely false. When people say that the Church is an assembly of true believers, they really say nothing (leaving aside the fantastic inclusion of the dead), for if I assert that a choir is an assembly of true musicians, I have elucidated nothing unless I say what I mean by 'true musicians'. In theology we learn that true believers are

those who follow the teaching of the Church, that is, who belong to the Church.

Not to dwell on the fact that there are hundreds of such true Churches, this definition tells us nothing and at first seems as useless as the definition of 'choir' as the assembly of true musicians. But then we catch sight of the fox's tail. The Church is true and it is one, and in it are pastors and flocks; and the pastors ordained by God teach this one true religion. So that it amounts to saying: 'I swear by God that all we are going to say is really true.' That is all. The whole fraud lies in that—in the word and idea of a Church. And the meaning of the fraud is merely that there are men who are beside themselves with desire to teach their religion to others.

And why are they so anxious to teach their religion to other people? If they had a real religion they would know that religion is an understanding of life—the relation each man establishes to God—and that consequently you cannot teach a religion but only a counterfeit of religion. But they want to teach. What for? The simplest reply would be that the priest wants loaves and eggs, and the Archbishop wants a palace, fish pies, and a silk cassock. But this reply is insufficient. Such no doubt is the inner psychological motive for the deception—that which maintains the fraud. But as it would be insufficient, when asking why an executioner consents to kill a man against whom he feels no anger, to say that he does so because he thereby gets bread and vodka and a red shirt, so it is insufficient to say that the Metropolitan of Kiev with the help of his monks, stuffs sacks with straw<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The celebrated Catacombs of the Kiev Monastery drew crowds of pilgrims to worship the relics of the Saints. It is reported that when a fire broke out in one of the chapels,

and calls them relics of the Saints, merely to get thirty thousand rubles a year income. Both acts are too terrible and too revolting to human nature for so simple and crude an explanation to be sufficient. Explaining their actions, both the executioner and the Metropolitan would have a whole series of arguments based chiefly on historical tradition. 'Men must be executed. Executions have gone on since the world commenced. If I don't do it another will. I hope by God's grace to do it better than another would.' And the Metropolitan would say: 'External worship is necessary; since the commencement of the world the relics of the Saints have been worshipped. People respect the relics in the Kiev Catacombs and pilgrims come here, by God's grace I hope to make the most pious use of the money'—thus blasphemously obtained.

To understand the religious fraud it is necessary to go to its source and origin.

We are speaking about what we know of Christianity. If we turn to the commencement of Christian doctrine in the Gospels, we find a teaching which plainly excludes the external worship of God, condemning it, and which with special clearness positively repudiates mastership. But from the time of Christ onwards we find a deviation from these principles that were laid down by him. This deviation begins from the times of the Apostles, and especially from that hankerer after mastership—Paul. And the further Christianity goes the more it deviates and the more it adopts the methods of external worship and mastership which Christ had so definitely condemned. But in the early times of

those who hastened to save the 'incorruptible body' of one of the saints found that the precious relic was merely a bag stuffed with straw.—A. M.

Christianity the conception of a Church was only employed to refer to all those who shared beliefs which I considered true. That conception of the Church is quite correct if it does not include those who make a verbal expression of religion, instead of its expression in the whole of life—for religion cannot be expressed in words.

The idea of a true Church was also used as an argument against dissenters. But till the time of the Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nicaea the Church was only an idea. From the time of the Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nicaea the Church becomes a reality and a fraudulent reality—that fraud of Metropolitans with relics, and priests with the eucharist, Iberian Mothers of God,<sup>1</sup> Synods, and so on, which so astonish and horrify us, and which are so odious that they cannot be explained merely by the avarice of those who perpetuate them. The fraud is ancient and was not begun merely for the profit of private individuals. No one would be such a monster of iniquity as to be the first to perpetrate it if that were the only motive. The reasons which caused the thing to be done were evil: 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' The root was evil: hatred, pride, enmity against Arius and others; and another yet greater evil—the alliance of Christianity with power. Power, personified in the Emperor Constantine, who in the heathen conception of things stood at the summit of human greatness (he was enrolled among the gods), accepts Christianity, sets an example to all the people, converts them, lends a helping hand against the heretics, and by means of the Ecumenical Council establishes the one true Christian religion.

<sup>1</sup> The Iberian Mother of God was the most celebrated of the miraculous icons of Moscow.—A. M.



The Catholic Christian religion was then established for all time. It was so natural to yield to this deception that to the present day there are people who believe in the saving efficacy of that assembly. Yet that was the moment when a majority of Christians abandoned their religion. At that turning-point the great majority of Christians entered the heathen path which they have followed ever since. Charlemagne and Vladímir<sup>1</sup> continued in the same direction.

And the Church fraud continues till now. The fraud consists in this: that the conversion of the powers-that-be to Christianity is necessary for those who understand the letter but not the spirit of Christianity; but the acceptance of Christianity without the abandonment of power is a satire on and a perversion of Christianity.

The sanctification of political power by Christianity is blasphemy; it is the negation of Christianity.

After fifteen hundred years of this blasphemous alliance of pseudo-Christianity with the State it needs a strong effort to free oneself from all the complex sophistries by which always and everywhere (to please the authorities) the sanctity and righteousness of State-power, and the possibility of its being Christian, has been pleaded.

In reality the term 'Christian State' resembles 'hot ice'. The thing is either not a State using violence, or it is not Christian.

In order to understand this clearly we must forget all those fantastic notions in which we have been

<sup>1</sup> Vladímir adopted Christianity A.D. 988. Many inhabitants of his capital city, Kiev, were disinclined to follow his example, so he 'acted vigorously' (as a Russian historian remarks) that is, he had the people driven into the Dnieper to be baptized. In other parts of his dominions Christianity was spread among the unwilling heathen population 'by fire and sword'.—A. M.

carefully brought up, and must ask plainly: what is the purpose of such historical and juridical science as has been taught us? Such sciences have no sound basis, their purpose is merely to supply a vindication for the use of violence.

Omitting the history of the Persians, the Medes, &c., let us take the history of the government which first formed an alliance with Christianity.

A robbers' nest existed at Rome. It grew by robbery, violence, murders, and it subdued nations. These robbers and their descendants, led by their chieftains (whom they sometimes called Caesar, sometimes Augustus), robbed and tormented nations to satisfy their desires. One of the descendants of these robber-chiefs, Constantine (a reader of books and a man satiated by an evil life), preferred certain Christian dogmas to those of the old creeds. Instead of offering human sacrifices he preferred the Mass; instead of the worship of Apollo, Venus, and Jove, he preferred that of a single God—with a son, Christ. So he decreed that this religion should be introduced among those who were under his power.

No one said to him: 'The kings exercise authority among the nations, but among you it shall not be so. Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not lay up riches; judge not; condemn not; resist not him that is evil.'

But they said to him: 'You wish to be called a Christian and to continue to be the chief of the robbers—to kill, burn, fight, lust, execute, and live in luxury? That can all be arranged.'

And they arranged a Christianity for him and arranged it very smoothly, better even than could have been expected. They foresaw that, reading the Gospels, it might occur to him that a Christian life is demanded and not the building of temples or

worshipping in them, so they carefully devised a kind of Christianity for him that would let him continue to live his old heathen life unembarrassed. On the one hand Christ, God's Son, came expressly to bring salvation to him and to everybody. Christ having died, Constantine can live as he likes. More even than that, one may repent and swallow a little bit of bread and some wine, and that will bring salvation and all will be forgiven.

But more even than that: they sanctify his robber-chieftainship and say that it proceeds from God, and they anoint him with holy oil. And he on his side arranges for them the congress of priests that they wish for, and orders them to say what each man's relation to God should be, and orders everyone to repeat what the priests tell them.

And everyone started repeating it and was content, and now this same religion has existed for fifteen hundred years and other robber-chiefs have adopted it, and they have all been lubricated with holy oil, and were all—every one of them—ordained by God. If any scoundrel slays a number of people and robs everyone, they will anoint him and then he will be from God. In Russia, Catherine II, the adulteress who killed her husband, was 'from God', so (in France) was Napoleon.

To balance matters the priests are not only 'from God' but are almost Gods themselves, because the Holy Ghost sits inside them as well as inside the Pope and in our Synod with its commandant-officials.

And as soon as one of the anointed robber-chiefs wishes his own and another folk to begin slaying each other, the priests immediately prepare some holy water, sprinkle a cross (which Christ bore and on which he died because he repudiated such robbers), take the cross and bless the robber-

chief in his work of slaughtering, hanging, and destroying.<sup>1</sup>

And it all might have been well if only they had been able to agree about it and the anointed had not begun to call each other robbers—which is what they really are—and the people had not begun to listen to them and cease to believe either in anointed or people in depositories of the Holy Ghost, and had not learnt from them to call them as they call one another, by their right names—robbers and deceivers.

But we have only spoken of the robbers incidentally, because it was they who led the deceivers astray. It is the deceivers, the pseudo-Christians, that we have to consider. They became such by their alliance with the robbers. It could not be otherwise. They turned from the right road when they consecrated the first ruler and assured him that he by his power could help religion—the religion of humility, self-sacrifice, and the endurance of evil. All the history not of the imaginary but of the real Church—the priests under the sway of kings—is a series of useless efforts of these unfortunate priests to preserve the truth of the teaching while preaching it by falsehood and abandoning it in practice. The importance of the priesthood depends entirely on the teaching it wishes to spread. That teaching speaks of humility, self-sacrifice, love and poverty, but is preached by violence and wrong-doing.

In order that the priesthood should have something to teach, and that they should have disciples, they cannot get rid of the teaching. But in order

<sup>1</sup> In England we do without the holy water, but sometimes an Archbishop draws up a form of prayer for the success of the King's army, and a chaplain is appointed to each regiment to teach the soldiers Christianity.—A. M.

to whitewash themselves and justify their immoral alliance with power, they have to conceal the essence of the teaching by all the most cunning devices possible, and for this purpose they have to shift the centre of gravity from what is essential in the teaching to what is external. And this is what is done by the priesthood—this is the source of the sham religion taught by the Church. The source is the alliance of the priests (calling themselves the Church) with the powers-that-be, that is, with violence. The source of their desire to teach a religion to others lies in the fact that true religion exposes them, and they want to replace true religion by a fictitious religion arranged to justify their deeds.

True religion may exist anywhere, except where it is evidently false, that is, violent. There cannot be a State religion.

True religion may exist in all the so-called sects and heresies, but it certainly cannot exist where it is joined to a State using violence. Curiously enough, the names 'Orthodox-Greek', 'Catholic', or 'Protestant' religion, as those words are commonly used, mean nothing but 'religion allied to power'—State religion and therefore false religion.

The idea of a Church as a union of many—of the majority—in one belief and in nearness to the source of the teaching, was in the two first centuries of Christianity merely one feeble external argument in favour of the correctness of certain views. Paul said: 'I know from Christ Himself.' Another said: 'I know from Luke.' And all said: 'We think rightly, and the proof that we are right is that we are a big assembly—*ekklesia*, the Church.' But only beginning with the Council of Nicaea, organized by an Emperor, does the Church become a plain and tangible fraud practised by some of the people who professed this religion.

They began to say: 'It has pleased us and the Holy Ghost.' 'The Church' no longer meant merely a part of a weak argument, it meant power in the hands of certain men. It allied itself with the rulers and began to act like the rulers. And all that united itself with power and submitted thereto, ceased to be a religion and became a fraud.

What does Christianity teach, understanding it as the teaching of any, or of all, the Churches?

Examine it as you will, compound it or divide it, the Christian teaching always falls into two sharply separated parts. There is the teaching of dogmas: from the Divine Son, the Ghost, and the relationship of these persons, to the eucharist—with or without wine and with leavened or unleavened bread; and there is the moral teaching of humility, freedom from covetousness, purity of mind and body, forgiveness, freedom from bondage, peacefulness, and the like. Much as the doctors of the Church have laboured to mix these two sides of the teaching, they have never mingled but, like oil and water, have always remained apart in larger or smaller circles.

The difference of the two sides of the teaching is clear to everyone and all can see the fruits of the one and of the other in the life of men, and by these fruits can conclude which side is the more important, and (if one may use the comparative form) more true. One looks at the history of Christendom from this aspect and is horror-struck. Without exception, from the very beginning and to the very end, till to-day, look where you will, examine what dogma you like, from the dogma of the divinity of Christ to the manner of making the sign of the cross<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of the main points of divergence between the Old Believers and the Orthodox Russian Church was whether two fingers or three should be extended when making the sign of the cross.—A. M.

and to the question of serving the Communion with or without wine, the fruit of the mental labours to explain the dogmas has always been envy, hatred, executions, banishments, slaughter of women and children, burnings, and tortures. Look on the other side, the moral teaching, from the going into the wilderness to commune with God, to the practice of supplying food to those who are in prison—the fruits of it are all our conceptions of goodness, all that is joyful, comforting, and that serves as a beacon to us in history.

People before whose eyes the fruits of the one and the other side of Christianity were not yet evident, might be misled and could hardly help being misled. And people might be misled who were sincerely drawn into disputes about dogmas, not noticing that by such disputes they were serving not God but the devil, not noticing that Christ said plainly that He came to destroy all dogmas. Those also might be led astray who had inherited a traditional belief in the importance of these dogmas and had received such a perverse mental training that they could not see their mistake. Again, those ignorant people might be led astray to whom these dogmas seemed nothing but words or fantastic notions. But we—to whom the simple meaning of the Gospels, repudiating all dogmas, is evident; before whose eyes are the fruits of these dogmas in history—cannot be so misled. History for us is a means—even a mechanical means—of verifying the teaching.

Is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception necessary or not? What has come of it? Hatred, abuse, irony. And did it bring any benefit? None at all. Was the teaching that the adulteress should not be sentenced necessary or not? What has come of it? Thousands and thousands of times people have been softened by that recollection.

Again, does everybody agree about any one of the dogmas? No. Do people agree that it is good to give to him that is in need? Yes, all agree.

But the one side—the dogmas—about which everyone disagrees and which no one requires, is what the priesthood gave out and still gives out in the name of religion; while the other side, about which all can agree and which is necessary to all and which really saves people, is the side which the priesthood, though they have not dared to reject it have also not dared to set forth as a teaching, for that teaching repudiates them.

[Written about 1882, but published 1904.]



## PREFACE to *The Teaching of Jesus*.

**L**AST year I formed a class of village children from ten to thirteen years of age. Wishing to impart Christ's teaching to them in a way they would understand and that would have an influence on their lives, I related to them in my own words those parts of the four Gospels which seem to me the most understandable, most suitable for children, and at the same time most necessary for moral guidance in life.

The longer I worked at this the more clearly I saw—from the way the children repeated what I told them and from their questions—what it was that they grasped most easily and by what they were most attracted.

Guided by that I composed this booklet, and I think its perusal, chapter by chapter, with such explanations as the reading evokes of the need of applying the eternal truths of this teaching to life, cannot but be beneficial to children, who according to Christ's words are especially receptive to teaching about the Kingdom of God.

LEO TOLSTOY.

[June 12, O.S., 1908.]

# THE TEACHING OF JESUS.

## I

JESUS CHRIST showed men by his teaching and by his life that the spirit of God lives in every man.

According to the teaching of Jesus Christ, all ills come to men because they think their life is in their body and not in the Spirit of God. That is why they quarrel with one another, why their souls suffer, and why they fear death.

The spirit of God is love. And love lives in each man's soul.

When people come to believe their life to be in the spirit of God—that is in love—there will be no enmity, no mental suffering, and no fear of death.

Every one wishes good for himself. The teaching of Christ shows men that good comes to them by love and that all can have this good. That is why the teaching of Christ is called the Evangel. *Ev* means 'good', *angelion* means 'tidings'—good tidings.

(1 John iv. 7, 12, 16.)

## 2

Jesus was born 1908 years ago, of Mary, the wife of Joseph.

Till the age of thirty he lived in the town of Nazareth with his mother, father and brothers, and when he was old enough he helped his father to do carpenter's work.

When Jesus was thirty years old he heard of people going to hear a holy man preach in the wilderness. This man's name was John. So Jesus went into the wilderness with others, to hear John preach.

John said it was time for the Kingdom of God

to come, when every one will understand that all men are equal and that no one is higher and no one lower than another, and that all men should live lovingly and in good accord with their fellows. He said this time was near, but would only quite come when people stopped doing wrong.

When plain people asked him: 'What am I to do?' John told them that he who had two garments should give one to him who had none, and in the same way he that had food should share it with him that had none. To the rich, John said that they should not rob the people. The soldiers he told not to plunder, but to be content with what was given them, and not to use bad language. The Pharisees and Sadducees, the lawyers, he told to change their lives and to repent: 'Do not think,' he said to them, 'that you are some special kind of men. Change your lives and change them so that men may see by your actions that you have changed. If you do not change you will not escape the fate of the fruit-tree that bears no fruit. If the tree bears no fruit it is cut down for firewood, and that is what will happen to you if you do no good. If you do not alter your lives you will perish.'

John tried to persuade everyone to be merciful, just, and meek. And those who promised to amend their lives he bathed in the river Jordan as a sign of the change in their lives. And when he bathed them he said: 'I cleanse you with water, but only the spirit of God within you can make you quite pure.'

The words of John, who said that people must change their lives so that the Kingdom of God might come and that only by the spirit of God could men become clean, sank deep into the heart of Jesus. And to think out all that he had heard from John, Jesus remained in the wilderness instead of returning

home. There he lived many days, thinking over what he had heard from John.

(Matt. i. 18; Luke ii. 51; iii. 23; Matt. iii. 1-13; Luke iii. 3-14; Matt. iv. 1, 2.)

## 3

John said that for the Kingdom of God to come, people must be cleansed by the spirit of God.

'What does cleansed by the spirit of God mean?' thought Jesus. 'If to be cleansed by the spirit of God means to live not for one's body but according to the spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God could certainly come, for the spirit of God is the same in all men, and if all men lived by that spirit they would all be united and the Kingdom of God would be here. But men must live in their bodies as well as in the spirit. If they live for the sake of their bodies, serving their bodies and making them their chief care, they will all live disunited as they do now, and the Kingdom of God will never come. Then what is to be done?' thought Jesus. 'To live only for the spirit is impossible, and to live only for the body, as worldly people do, is wrong; and if we live so, we shall all live apart and the Kingdom of God will never come. Then what is to be done? It will not do for a man to kill his body, for the spirit lives in the body by the will of God. To kill oneself is therefore to go against the will of God.'

And having thought this, Jesus said to himself: 'It comes to this: We cannot live only in the spirit, because the spirit lives in the body. And we ought not to live only in the body, serving it as most people do. Nor can we free ourselves from the body, for the spirit lives in the body by God's will. Then what can be done? Only one thing: We can live in the body as God wishes us to, but while living in the body we must serve not it but God.'

And, having come to that conclusion, Jesus left the wilderness and went through the towns and villages to preach his teaching.

(Matt. iv. 3-10; Luke iv. 3-15.)

## 4

And the rumour of Jesus spread through the district and many people began to come to him to hear his words.

And he spoke to the people saying:

'You went out to hear John in the wilderness. Why did you go? One goes to see people dressed in fine clothes, but they live in palaces; there was nothing of that kind in the wilderness. Then why did you go to John in the wilderness? You went to hear a man who taught you how to live a good life. What did he teach you? He taught you that the Kingdom of God must come, but that to make it come—and that there may be no evil in the world—it is necessary that men should not live separately, each for himself, but that all should be united, loving one another. So that to bring about the Kingdom of God you must first of all change your life. The Kingdom of God will not come of itself, God will not establish that Kingdom; but you yourselves must and can establish that Kingdom of God, and you will establish it when you try to change your way of life.

'Do not think that the Kingdom of God will appear in a visible form. The Kingdom of God cannot be seen. And if they tell you: "It is there, or there," do not believe them, and do not go after it. The Kingdom of God is not at any special time or in any special place. It is everywhere and nowhere—for it is within yourselves, in your own souls.'

(Matt. xi. 7-12; Luke xvi. 16; xvii. 20-4.)

## 5

And Jesus explained his teaching more and more clearly. Once when many people had come to him he began telling them how men should live so that the Kingdom of God may come.

He said:

'God's Kingdom is quite different from worldly kingdoms. Into God's Kingdom the proud and the rich will not enter. The proud and the rich rule now: they amuse themselves, and everybody praises and respects them. But so long as they are proud and rich and the Kingdom of God is not in their souls, they will not enter the Kingdom of God. Not the proud will enter the Kingdom of God, but the meek; not the rich, but the poor. But the meek and the poor will only enter it if they are meek and poor because they would not sin in order to become grand and rich, not simply because they were unable to become rich and famous. If you are poor only because you are unable to get riches, you are like salt that has no taste. Salt is no use unless it tastes salt, if it does not taste salt it is good for nothing and is thrown away.

'It is the same with you: if you are poor only because you did not know how to get rich, you also are not fit for anything—neither to be poor nor to be rich.

'So before all else it is necessary to be in the Kingdom of God. Seek for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and you will have all you need.'

'Do not think that I am teaching you anything new. I teach you what all the wise and holy men taught. I only teach you how to fulfil what they taught. And to do that you must obey God's commandments—not merely talk about them as false

teachers do, but fulfil them. For only he who fulfils God's commandments and by his example teaches others to fulfil them will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'

(Matt. v. 1-20; Luke vi. 20-6.)

6

And Jesus said:

'The first commandment is this: In the *old law* it was said, "Do no murder," and, "He who murders is a sinner."

'But I tell you that if a man is angry with his brother he is a sinner before God; and he is a yet greater sinner if he says a rude word of abuse to his brother. So if you begin to pray, and remember that you are angry with your brother, first go and make it up with him, or if for any reason you cannot do that, put away the anger against him that is in your heart.

'That is the first commandment.

'The second commandment is this: The *old law* said, "Do not commit adultery, and if you separate from your wife, give her a letter of divorce."

'But I tell you that not only must a man not commit adultery, but if he looks at a woman with bad thoughts in his mind he is already a sinner before God. And about divorce, I tell you that a man who divorces his wife commits adultery himself and leads his wife into doing the same, and also leads into sin him who marries the divorced woman.

'That is the second commandment.

'The third commandment is this: In the *old law* you were told, "Do not forswear yourself, but keep your oaths before God."

'But I say that you should not swear at all, but if you are asked about anything, say, "Yes" if it is Yes, and "No" if it is No. You must not swear by

anything. Man is altogether in God's power and cannot promise beforehand to do what his oath binds him to.

'That is the third commandment.

'The fourth commandment is this: in the *old law* it was said: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

'But I say that you should not return evil for evil, and take an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth. And if any one strikes you on one cheek it is better to turn the other cheek to him than to give a blow in answer to a blow. And if any one wants to take away your shirt, it is better to give him your coat as well than to be his enemy and fight with your brother. You must not resist evil with evil.

'That is the fourth commandment.

'The fifth commandment is this: in your *old law* it was said: "Love the people of your own nation, and hate the people of other nations."

'But I tell you that you must love everybody. If men think themselves your enemies and hate and curse you and attack you, you should still love them and do good to them. All men are sons of one Father; all are brethren; and therefore you must love every one equally.

'That is the fifth and last commandment.'

(Matt. v. 21-48.)

7

And Jesus went on to tell all who were listening to him what would happen if they obeyed his commandments.

'Do not think,' said he, 'that if you do not get angry with people, are peaceable with everybody, live with one wife, do not swear, do not defend yourselves against those who offend you, give away all you are asked for, and love your enemies—do not



think that if you live like that your life will be harder and worse than it is now. Do not think so; your life will not be worse but much better than it now is. Our heavenly Father has given us this law not to make our lives worse but that we might have true life.

‘Live according to this teaching and the Kingdom of God will come, and you will have all you need.

‘To birds and beasts God has given their laws, and when they live according to those laws things go well with them. And things will go well with you if you obey the law of God. What I say I do not say from myself, but it is the law of God written in the hearts of all men. If this law would not bring welfare to men God would not have given it.

‘The law, in a few words, is that we should love God, and our neighbour as ourselves. He who obeys this law behaves to others as he would wish them to behave to him.

‘And therefore every one who hears these words of mine and fulfils them, does as a man does who builds his house on a rock. Such a man fears neither rain, nor floods, nor storms, because his house is built on a rock. But every one who hears my words and does not fulfil them, acts like a thoughtless man who builds his house on sand. Such a house will not stand against the waters or the storms, but will fall down in ruins.’

And when Jesus had finished speaking, the people were astonished at his teaching.

(Matt. vi. 26-33; vii. 24-8.)

8

And after that Jesus began to explain the meaning of the Kingdom of God to the people in parables.

Here is the first parable he told them:

‘When a man sows seed on his field he does not keep thinking about it, but sleeps at night, and gets up in the morning and goes about his business without troubling how the seeds come up and grow. The seeds swell and sprout, the green appears, stalks form, then ears, and the grain swells. And only when the corn is ripe for harvest does the master send labourers to reap it.

‘So also God does not establish the Kingdom of Heaven among men by His own power, but leaves it to people to establish it themselves.’

Jesus told them a second parable, to show that men who have not the Kingdom of Heaven within them, and whom therefore God does not take into His Kingdom, He leaves in the world that they may make themselves worthy to enter the Kingdom of God.

He said:

‘The Kingdom of Heaven is like a fisherman who casts out his nets in the sea and catches all sorts of fish. Having caught them he sorts them, keeps those he needs, and puts back into the sea those that are no good.’

And he told a third parable about the same thing:

‘A master sowed good seed in his field, but when the seed began to come up, weeds grew up too among it. And the labourers came and said to the master, “Did you sow bad seeds? Many weeds are growing in your field. Send us, and we will go and pull them up.” But the master said, “No, you had better not, or in pulling up the weeds you will tread down the wheat; let them grow together, and when harvest-time comes I will tell the reapers to gather in the wheat and throw away the weeds.”

‘So also God does not allow people to interfere with the lives of others, and does not interfere

Himself. Only by his own efforts can each man come to God.'

(Mark iv. 26-9; Matt. xiii. 47, 48; 24-30.)

## 9

Besides these parables, Jesus told another about the Kingdom of Heaven.

He said:

'When seeds are sown in a field, not all of them grow up alike. This is what happens: some seeds fall on the road and birds come and pick them up. Others fall on stony ground, and though they grow up it is only for a short time, for they have no soil into which to strike their roots and so their shoots soon dry up. And some seeds fall among thorns and the thorns choke them. But there are some that fall on good earth and grow, and one grain bears thirty or sixty grains.

'So it is with men. There are some who do not receive the Kingdom of Heaven into their hearts, and temptations of the flesh come to them and steal away what was sown: these are the seeds sown on the road. Then there are the men who at first accept the teaching gladly, but afterwards when they are insulted and persecuted for it turn away from it. They are the seed sown on stony ground. Then there are the people who understand the meaning of the Kingdom of Heaven, but worldly cares and greed for riches choke it within them. They are the seed sown among thorns. But those that are sown on good ground are those who understand the meaning of the Kingdom of Heaven and take it into their hearts, and these people bear fruit, some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundredfold.

'So that he who has kept what was given him will receive more, but from him who has not kept what was given him, all that he has will be taken away.

Therefore try with all your might to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Do not grudge anything if only you can get in.

‘Do like the man who, when he found out that a great treasure had been buried in a field, sold all he had and bought that field and became rich. You should do the same.

‘Remember that a little effort for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven brings much fruit, just as a small seed grows into a big tree.

‘Every one can by his own effort gain the Kingdom of God, for the Kingdom of God is within you.’

(Matt. xiii. 3-8, 12, 19-23, 31, 32, 44-6; Luke xvi. 16.)

## 10

And hearing these words, a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus and asked him how he was to understand that the Kingdom of God is within us. And Jesus said, ‘That the Kingdom of God is within us means that to enter it we must be born again.’

And Nicodemus asked: ‘How can a man be born again? Can a man go back inside his mother and be born again?’

Jesus said to him: ‘To be born again does not mean to be born in the flesh as a baby is born of its mother, but for the spirit to be born. For the spirit to be born means to understand that the spirit of God lives in man, and that besides being born like every man of his mother he is also born of the spirit of God. What is born of the body is of the body; it suffers and dies. What is born of the spirit is spirit, and lives by itself, and can neither suffer nor die.

‘God put His spirit into men, not that they should suffer and perish but that they should have a glad and an everlasting life. And every man can have that life. That life is the Kingdom of Heaven.

'So the Kingdom of God must not be understood to mean that at some time and in some particular place the Kingdom of God will come to everybody; but that if people realize the spirit of God in themselves and live by it, then they enter the Kingdom of Heaven and do not suffer or die; but if people do not realize the spirit that is in themselves and live for their bodies, then they suffer and perish.'

(John iii. 1-21.)

## II

More and more people followed Jesus and listened to his teaching; and the Pharisees did not like this, and they began to consider what they could accuse Jesus of before the people.

One Saturday Jesus and his disciples were walking through the fields, and the disciples plucked ears of corn, rubbed them between their hands, and ate the grain. Now according to the teaching of the Jews, God made an agreement with Moses that people should do no work on Saturdays but should only pray to God, and the Pharisees, seeing that the disciples of Jesus rubbed the ears of corn on a Saturday, stopped them and said: 'You should not do that on Saturday. No work should be done on Saturday, but you are rubbing corn. The law says that those who work on Saturday must be put to death.'

Jesus heard this, and said: 'The Prophet said that God wants love and not sacrifices. If you understood those words you would not condemn my disciples. Men are more important than Saturdays.' And the Pharisees did not know what to answer and were silent.

Another time some Pharisees saw that Jesus entered the house of Matthew, a tax-collector, and dined with his household. And those with whom

he dined were considered by the Pharisees to be sinners. So they blamed Jesus, saying that it was not lawful to eat with the unfaithful.

But Jesus said: 'I teach the truth to all who wish to learn the truth. You consider yourselves faithful and think you know the truth, so there is nothing more for you to learn. It follows that only the unfaithful can be taught; and how are they to learn the truth if we do not mix with them?'

Then the Pharisees, not knowing what to answer, began reproaching the disciples of Jesus for eating with unwashed hands. They themselves strictly observed their own tradition of how to wash their hands and their dishes, and they would eat nothing that came from the market unless it had been washed.

And to this Jesus replied: 'You reproach us because we do not keep the custom of washing before we eat; but it is not that which enters a man's body that can defile him. It is that which comes out of a man's soul that defiles him, for out of man's soul comes evil: adultery, murder, robbery, avarice, anger, fraud, impudence, envy, calumny, pride, and all evil. All evil comes out of the soul of man, and only evil can defile a man. Let there be love for your brothers in your soul and then everything will be pure.'

(Matt. xii. 1-8; ix. 9-13; Mark vii. 1-5; 14-23.)

## 12

Once Jesus went apart from the disciples and began to pray. And when he had finished they came to him and said: 'Master, teach us how to pray.'

And he said to them:

'First of all, you must not pray as is often done, that people may see you praying and praise you

for it. If it is done that way it is done for the sake of men, and it is men who reward it. The soul does not benefit by such prayers. But if you wish to pray, go into a place where no one will see you, and there pray to your Father; and your Father will give you what you need for your soul.

‘And when you pray, do not say too much. Your Father knows what you need, and even if you do not say it at all He will give you all your soul requires.

‘You must pray first of all that the spirit of God within us should be holy; that the Kingdom of Heaven should come into our souls; that we should live not according to our own will but according to God’s will; that we should not wish for too much, but only for our daily food; that our Father should help us to forgive our brothers in their sins, and that He should help us to avoid temptations and evil.

‘Let your prayer be this:

‘Our Father, Who art in Heaven! hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive them that sin against us. And deliver us from temptation and from evil.

‘That is the way to pray; but if you want to pray, think first whether there is no anger in your heart against any one, and if you remember that there is, then first go and make it up with him; or if you cannot find that man, get the anger against him out of your heart and only then begin to pray. Only then will your prayer be of use to you.’

(Luke xi. 1; Matt. vi. 5-13; Mark xi. 25, 26; Matt. v. 23, 24.)

It happened once that Jesus went to dine with a Pharisee. And while he was there a woman of the

town came in. She was one of the unfaithful. She had heard that Jesus was in the Pharisee's house, and came there and brought a bottle of perfume. And she knelt at the feet of Jesus and wept, and her tears dropped on his feet, and she wiped them with her hair and poured on them the perfume out of her bottle.

And the Pharisee seeing this was tempted, and thought that if Jesus were really a prophet he would have known that this woman was unfaithful and a sinner, and would not have let her touch him.

Jesus guessed what the Pharisee was thinking, and turning to him said:

'Shall I tell you what I am thinking?'

'Yes, tell me,' said the Pharisee.

And Jesus said:

'Two men were in debt to a rich man. One owed him fifty pounds and the other five pounds. Neither of them had anything to pay with, and the rich man forgave them both. Now which of the two do you think would love and serve the rich man best?'

The Pharisee said:

'Of course the one who owed most.'

Then Jesus, pointing to the woman, said:

'So it is with you and with this woman. You think yourself righteous, and therefore not owing God much. She considers herself unfaithful, and therefore owing Him a great deal. When I came into your house you did not give me any water to wash my feet with, but she has washed them with tears and dried them with her hair. You did not kiss me, but she kisses my feet. You did not give me any oil for my head, but she pours rich perfume on my feet. She thinks herself a great sinner and therefore it is easy for her to love people. But you consider yourself righteous and so it is difficult



for you to love. But to him who loves much, all is forgiven.'

(Luke vii. 36-48.)

## 14

Another day Jesus was passing through Samaria. He was weary, and sat down by a well while his disciples went into the town to buy bread. A woman came from the village to fetch water and Jesus asked her to let him drink. The woman said to him: 'Why, you Jews don't have anything to do with us Samaritans. So how can you ask me for a drink?' Jesus answered: 'If you knew me and what I teach, you would not speak like that but would give me some water, and I would give you the water of life.'

The woman did not understand him, and said: 'Where would you get any other water? There is no water here but this out of the well of our father Jacob.'

And he said to her: 'He who drinks of the water of this well will want to drink again, but he who drinks of the water I give him will always be satisfied and will give others to drink of it.'

The woman understood that he was talking about godly matters, and said: 'But I am a Samaritan and you are a Jew, so you cannot teach me. Our people pray on this mountain, and you Jews say that God's only house is in Jerusalem.'

Jesus said: 'That used to be so, but now the time has come when men will pray to the Father not on this mountain or in Jerusalem, nor in this place or that, but everyone will worship the heavenly Father in the spirit and in truth. God is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.'

The woman did not understand what he said to her, and replied: 'I have heard that God's

messenger will come, and then everything will be explained.'

And Jesus said: 'Woman, try to understand what I have told you, and do not wait for anything more.'

(John iv. 4-26.)

## 15

Jesus went through the towns and villages preaching, and he also sent his disciples to places he intended to visit. He said to them:

'Many people do not know the blessing of real life. I pity them all, and should like to show them what I know. As a master cannot manage to work his field alone but calls labourers for the harvest, so I call you. Go to the different towns, and tell of the teaching about the Kingdom of God everywhere. Tell people the commandments of the Kingdom, and fulfil those commandments yourselves in everything.

'I am sending you like sheep among wolves. Be wise as serpents and pure as doves. First of all have nothing of your own, take nothing with you: no bag, no bread, no money, only the clothes on your bodies and the shoes on your feet. And do not make distinctions between people. Do not choose the house in which you will stay, but stay at the first house you come to. When you enter, greet the inmates. If they receive you, go in; if not, go to the next house.

'People will hate you for what you say, and will attack and drive you from place to place, but do not be dismayed. When you are driven from one village go to another; and if you are turned out of that, go to a third. You will be hunted as sheep are hunted by wolves, and will be beaten and taken before the rulers to justify yourselves to them. And when you are brought before judges and before

the rulers, do not think about what you are going to say, but know that within you lives the spirit of your Father and He will say what is necessary.

‘People may kill your body but they cannot do anything to your soul, so do not be afraid of men. Be afraid only of your soul perishing with your body if you swerve from fulfilling your Father’s will. That is what you should fear. Not one little bird perishes without your Father’s will. Without His will not a hair falls from your head, and if you are in His care what have you to fear?’

(Luke x. 1-7; Matt. x. 7-12; 16-31.)

## 16

And the disciples he sent out went one way, while Jesus with the other disciples went another way through the villages and hamlets. And once he came into a village, and a woman named Martha asked him to her house. He went in and began to speak, and Martha’s sister Mary sat at his feet listening while Martha busied herself getting food ready.

And Martha saw that her sister sat at the feet of Jesus listening to him; and she came to Jesus and said: ‘I am doing all the work alone, while my sister sits listening to you. Tell her to come and work with me.’

And Jesus said:

‘Martha, Martha! You are busy and anxious about many things, but only one thing is necessary. And Mary has chosen that one thing that is necessary and which no one can take from her. For true life, food for the soul is needed, not food for the body.’

And Jesus told a parable about it:

‘A man once had a very good harvest and thought, Now I will rebuild my barns and put up larger ones and gather all my goods into them. And

I will say to my soul: "Here, soul, is plenty of everything. Rest, eat, drink, and live for your pleasure." But God said to him, "You fool; this night your soul shall be taken from you, and all you have collected will belong to others."

'So it happens to everybody who prepares for the life of the body and does not live for the soul.

'Only he lives a real life who gives up his own will and is always ready to do the will of God. But he who is anxious about his bodily life destroys his real life.'

(Luke x. 38-42; xii. 15-21; ix. 23-5.)

## 17

Jesus happened to hear some people telling how Pilate had killed some Galileans, and also how a tower had fallen and crushed eighteen men. And Jesus asked the people:

'Do you think those men were particularly guilty of anything? No; we all know that they were not at all worse than we are. And what has happened to them might at any moment happen to us. All of us may die to-day or to-morrow. We cannot escape death, so there is no need for us to take care of our bodily life. We know that it must soon end. We must take care of that which does not die—the life of the spirit.'

And he explained this by a parable:

'A master had in his garden an apple tree that bore no fruit, and he said to his gardener, "I have come for three years now, looking for fruit, and this tree still has none. It must be cut down, for it only takes up room uselessly." But the gardener said, "Let us wait a little longer, master, and I will dig round it and manure it, and we shall see next summer. Perhaps it will bear fruit. If it has no fruit next year then we will cut it down."

‘So it is with us. While we live only in the body and do not bear the fruit of the spirit, our Master does not cut us down, does not put us to death, because he expects fruit from us—the life of the spirit. But if we do not bear fruit we cannot escape destruction. No wisdom is needed to understand this; everyone can see it for himself. For we know how to reason and guess what will happen, not only about household matters, but even about the things of nature. When the wind is from the west we say it will rain, when it is from the south we say it will be fine, and so it is. How is it that we can foretell the weather but cannot foresee that we must all die, and that it is not our mortal bodily life that we must preserve, but the immortal spiritual life?’

(Luke xiii. 1-9; xii. 54-7.)

18

Another time Jesus told the people a parable of what man's life is like. He said:

‘There was a rich man who had to go away from home. And before he went he called his slaves and gave them ten pounds of silver, one pound to each, and he said: “Work, each of you while I am away, with what I have given you.” Having said that, he started on his journey. And when he had gone the slaves felt free and did as they liked. But when the master returned, he called his slaves and ordered each of them to tell him what he had done with the silver. The first came and said: “With your pound of silver I have earned ten pounds.” And the master said to him, “That is well done, good slave; you have been faithful in a small thing so I will give you great things to manage. Be my equal, sharing all my wealth.”

‘The second slave came, and said: “Master, with your pound of silver I have earned five.” And the

master said to him: "You have done well, good slave. You too shall be my equal in the whole of my estate."

"Then came the third slave, and said: "Here is your pound of silver, Lord; I wrapped it up in a handkerchief and kept it, because I know you—you are a severe man. You take where you did not put anything, and reap where you did not sow, and I was afraid of you." And the master said: "Foolish slave, I will judge you by your own words. You say that for fear of me you kept my silver and did not use it. If you knew that I am severe and take where I have not put, why did you not do as I ordered? Had you used my silver, my wealth would have increased and you would have done what I told you. But now you have not done the very thing I gave you the silver for, so you must not have it."

"And the master ordered them to take the silver from him who had not used it, and give it to those who had worked most. Then the servants said to the master: "Lord, they already have so much." But the master said, "Give it to those who have worked much, for those who use what is given them get more, but those who do not use it have everything taken away from them."

"So it is with the life of men," said Jesus. "The rich master is the Father. His slaves are men. The silver is the spirit of God in man. As the master did not himself work with his silver but told each of his slaves to work with what was entrusted to him, so our heavenly Father has given men His spirit that they should increase it in themselves and use what has been given them. And wise men understand that the life of the spirit is given them to do the will of the Father, and they increase in themselves the life of the spirit and become sharers in the life of the Father. But unwise people, like the foolish slave,

fear to lose their bodily life, and do only their own will and not the will of their Father, and so they lose the true life.

‘Such people lose that which is most precious—the life of the spirit. And there is no more harmful mistake than to consider one’s life to be of the body and not of the spirit. One must be at one with the spirit of life. He who is not with it is against it. One must serve the spirit of life, and not one’s own body.’

(Luke xix. 11–26; Matt. xxv. 14–30; Luke xi. 23.)

## 19

One day some children were brought to Jesus. His disciples began to turn them away, but Jesus saw this and said:

‘You should not turn the children away. Children should not be sent away, but we should learn from them, for they are nearer to the Kingdom of God than grown-up people. Children do not use bad language, do not bear malice, do not commit adultery, do not take oaths, do not go to law with anybody, and do not know any difference between their own nation and other nations. Children are nearer than grown-up people to the Kingdom of Heaven. One must not drive children away but must be careful not to lead them into temptation.

‘Temptations destroy men by leading them to do most harmful deeds under the guise of what is good and pleasant. If a man gives way to temptation he destroys both his body and his soul. Therefore it is better for one’s body to suffer than to fall into temptation. As a fox that has got its paw into a trap bites off the paw in order to escape, so it is better for every man to suffer in his body than to yield to temptation. It is better not only for a hand or a foot, but even for the whole body to perish,

rather than to become accustomed to evil, and grow to like it. Temptations bring sorrow to the world. All evil comes into the world by temptation.'

(Matt. xix. 13, 14; xviii. 2-9; Luke xviii. 17.)

## 20

And Jesus also said that of all temptations the worst is anger.

'A man is angry with his brother for his sins and thinks that by being angry he can cure his brother of his sins, and forgets that not one of us can judge his brother because every one of us is full of sin, and before correcting our brother we must correct ourselves—otherwise we may see a little grain of dust in our brother's eyes and overlook a whole shaving in our own. And so if you think your brother has acted badly, choose a time and a place where you can talk with him alone, and tell him gently what you have against him. If he listens to you, instead of being your enemy he will become your friend. But if he will not listen to you, be sorry for him and leave him alone.'

And one of the disciples asked: 'But if he does not listen to me and again offends me, am I to forgive him again? And if he offends me again and again, a third and a fourth and a seventh time, must I even then forgive him?'

And Jesus answered: 'We should forgive not only seven times, but seventy times seven; for as God forgives us all our sins if only we repent of them, so we must always forgive our brothers.'

(Matt. vii. 1-5; xviii. 15-22.)

## 21

To explain this Jesus told them the following parable:

'A rich man began reckoning up with his debtors.



And a debtor was brought to him who owed him a thousand pounds and had nothing to pay it with. And the rich man could have sold the debtor's estate and his wife and children, and the man himself. But the debtor begged for mercy, and the rich man had pity on him and forgave him the whole debt. And when he had been forgiven, a poor man who owed him something came to him and asked to be forgiven his debt. But the debtor who had been forgiven, would not excuse the poor man's debt but demanded payment at once. And hard as the poor man begged, the other would have no mercy but cast him into prison. This was noticed, and people came to the rich man and told him what his debtor had done. Then the rich man called the debtor back to him, and said: "I let you off the whole of your debt because you asked me, and you should have forgiven your debtor as I forgave you. But what have you done?" And then the rich man enforced the law against his debtor.

'The same happens to us if we do not forgive from our hearts all who are guilty towards us. Every quarrel with our brother binds us, and takes us farther from our Father. And therefore in order not to be removed from God, we must forgive our brothers and live peaceably and lovingly with men.'

(Matt. xviii. 23-35, 18, 19.)

22

Once some Pharisees came to Jesus, and asked him if a man might leave his wife and take another. And Jesus answered:

'You know that a child can be born only of one father and mother. God has arranged it so, and man must not violate what God has arranged. If a man violates what God has arranged and leaves his wife and takes another woman, he commits a

threefold sin—against himself, against his wife, and against other people. He harms himself because he accustoms himself to dissoluteness. He harms his wife because, by deserting her, he drives her to do wrong. He harms other people because he tempts them by setting them an example of adultery.'

And the disciples said to Jesus: 'It is too difficult to live with only one wife. If one must live with one woman till death no matter what she may be like, then it is best not to marry at all.'

Jesus answered them: 'One may abstain from marrying at all. But if a man wishes to live without a wife, let him be quite pure and not think about women. It is well for a man who can live such a life, but if a man cannot do it, let him marry and live with one wife till death and not allow himself to be tempted by other women.'

(Matt. xix. 3-12.)

## 23

One day the collectors of tithes for the Temple came to Peter, and asked him: 'Will your Master pay what is due?' Peter said that he would. And Jesus, hearing this, said to Peter: 'What do you think, Peter—from whom does the King take taxes, from his sons or from strangers?' Peter said, 'From strangers.' 'So if we are sons of God,' said Jesus, 'we need not pay tithes. But in order not to tempt men, pay them; not because we are obliged to pay, but in order not to lead them into temptation.'

Another time some Pharisees made an agreement with the King's officers and came to Jesus to try to catch him in his words, and to see whether he would refuse his obligation to the King. They said to him: 'You teach everything truly, so tell us, Must we pay taxes to the King?' Jesus said: 'Show

me with what you pay the taxes to the King.' They showed him a coin. On the coin was stamped the King's head. And Jesus pointed to it and said, 'Give to the King what is the King's; but what is God's—your souls—give to no one but to God. Your money, property, work—everything that any one asks of you, give to him, but do not do for anybody what is against God's laws.'

(Matt. xvii. 24-7; xxii. 15-22.)

24

It happened one day that the disciples of Jesus came to a village and asked to be allowed to spend the night there. But no one would let them in. And the disciples came to Jesus and told Him about it, saying: 'Such wicked people live there—they deserve to be killed by a thunderstorm!'

And Jesus was grieved, and said: 'You do not understand of what spirit you are. I do not teach how to destroy but how to save people. How can one wish one's neighbour any ill? In every man the same spirit of God lives as in you, and you must not wish ill to that which is within yourselves.'

Another time the Scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman taken in adultery and placed her before him, saying: 'Master, this woman was taken in adultery, and according to the law of Moses such women must be stoned. What do you say?'

They said that to tempt him. Had he said that she must be stoned it would have been contrary to his teaching of love for all, but if he had said that it must not be done he would have spoken against the law of Moses. Jesus, however, did not answer anything, but stooped down and wrote with his finger in the sand.

They asked him the same thing again. Then he looked up and said: 'You say that according to the

law she must be stoned—then do it. But let him who is sinless throw the first stone at her.’ Having said that he bowed his head and again wrote on the ground. And the accusers began to go away one after the other, and Jesus was left alone with the woman.

Then Jesus lifted his head, and seeing no one but the woman, said to her: ‘It seems that no one has condemned you?’ She answered, ‘No one, Lord.’

‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ said Jesus. ‘Go, and sin no more.’

(Luke ix. 52-6; John viii. 3-11.)

25

Jesus taught the people that all men are children of one Father, and that therefore the whole law of God is to love God and one’s neighbour.

And a lawgiver, knowing this and wishing to catch Jesus in his words and to show him that all men are not equal, and that men of different nations cannot be equally the sons of God, asked Jesus: ‘You teach us to love our neighbour. But who is my neighbour?’

Jesus answered him by a parable, and said:

‘There was a rich Jew; and it happened that once, as he was returning home, he was attacked by robbers, who beat him, robbed him, and left him by the roadside. A Jewish priest passed by and saw the wounded man, but passed on without stopping. And another Jew, a Levite, passed, and he also saw the wounded man and went by. Then a man of another nation, a Samaritan, came along the road, and he saw the wounded man; and—without considering that the Jews did not look upon Samaritans as neighbours, but as foreigners and enemies—he pitied the Jew, lifted him up, and took him on his ass to an inn. There he washed and dressed his

wounds, paid the innkeeper for him, and only left when the Jew could do without him.

‘You ask, Who is one’s neighbour?’ said Jesus. ‘He in whom there is love considers every man his neighbour, no matter what nation he may belong to.’

(Luke x. 25-37.)

## 26

The teaching of Jesus spread more and more, and the Pharisees grew more and more angry with him. They said to the people: ‘Do not listen to him; he is deceiving you. If you were to live by his commandments there would be more evil in the world than there is now.’

Jesus heard this, and said to them:

‘You say that if I teach the people not to seek for riches, but to be poor; not to be angry, not to demand an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but to bear all things and love everybody—I do away with evil by evil, and that if men followed my teaching their life would be worse than it was before. You say that in place of the old evil there would be a new evil. That is not true. It is not I who put one evil in place of another; but it is you who drive out evil with evil. You wish to destroy evil by threats, executions, oaths, and by killing. But evil still does not get destroyed. And it cannot be so destroyed, for no power can destroy itself. I do not drive out evil by such means as you use. I destroy evil by good. I destroy evil by calling on men to fulfil those commandments which will save them from all evil.’

(Matt. xii. 24-8.)

## 27

One day his mother and brothers came to Jesus, and could not get to him because there were so many people around him. And a man noticed this,

and came to Jesus and said: 'Your relations, your mother and brothers, are standing out there, and wish to see you.'

And Jesus said: 'My mother and my brothers are those who know the will of the Father and do it.'

'For every man the will of God his Father should be more important than his father, his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers or his sisters, or all his property, or even his bodily life.'

'In worldly matters every reasonable man before he begins doing anything reckons out if what he means to do is profitable, and if it is profitable he does it, and if not he does not do it. Any one who wishes to build a house, before beginning sits down and counts how much money will be needed, how much he has, and whether it will be enough to complete the house—so that it should not happen that he has only wasted his strength and time by having begun to build what he cannot finish. And every king if he wants to go to war, first considers whether with ten thousand men he can fight against twenty thousand. If he reckons out that he cannot, he sends messengers to make peace and does not fight.'

'So every man must understand that all that he looks upon as his: his family, his property, and his bodily life itself, will be taken from him to-day or to-morrow, and that the one thing that is his and can never be taken from him, is his spiritual life, and that he can and must care only about that.'

Hearing this, a man said: 'It is well if there be a spiritual life, but how if we give away everything and there is no such life?' •

To this Jesus replied:

'Everyone knows that there is a spiritual life and that it alone does not die. You all know that, but you do not act on what you know—not because you

doubt it but because you are diverted from real life by false cares.'

And he told them this parable:

'A master prepared a feast and sent his servants to invite the guests, but the guests refused to come. One said, "I have bought some land and must go and see it." Another said, "I have bought some cattle, and must get on with my ploughing." A third said, "I have married, and it is my wedding-feast." So the servants returned and told their master that no one would come. Then the master sent to invite the beggars. The beggars did not refuse to come, and they feasted.

'In the same way, only when men are free from bodily cares do they know the spiritual life.'

(Luke viii. 19-21; Matt. xii. 46-50; Luke xiv. 26-33, 15-24.)

28

Once a young man came to Jesus and knelt down before him, saying: 'Good Master, tell me what to do to get eternal life.'

Jesus answered: 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God. You know the commandments. Keep them.'

And the young man asked: 'Which? There are many commandments.'

Jesus answered: 'Do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not lie, do not steal, do not offend anyone, and honour your father and mother.'

And the man said: 'I have kept these commandments ever since I was a boy.'

Jesus looked at him and felt fond of him, and said: 'You still lack one thing. Go and sell all you have and divide it among the poor.'

And the young man was troubled and went away without replying, for he was very rich.

And Jesus said to his disciples:

‘You see how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!’ The disciples were dismayed at these words, but Jesus repeated them, saying, ‘Yes, children; it is very, very hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’ And they were still more dismayed, and said among themselves: ‘How is a man to live if he may not have anything? He would freeze, and starve.’ But Christ said: ‘It only seems frightful to the physical man, but to the spiritual man it is easy. He who believes and tries it will see that this is true.’

(Mark x. 17-27; Matt. xix. 18.)

29

Jesus also said: ‘You cannot serve two masters at the same time: God and riches; the will of the Father and your own will. You must choose between the two, and serve the one or the other.’

The Pharisees, who loved riches, heard this, and laughed at the words of Jesus. And he said to them: ‘You think that you are really honourable because men honour you for your riches? No! God does not look at what is outside but at the heart. Things that men think much of are worthless in God’s sight. It is not the rich but the poor who enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’

Jesus knew that the Pharisees believed that after death some people go to hell and some to heaven, and he told them this parable about riches:

‘There once lived a very rich man, who feasted, dressed in fine clothes, and made merry every day. And in the same place there lived a scabby beggar called Lazarus. Lazarus came into the rich man’s courtyard hoping to get some of the scraps left over from the rich man’s table. But he got none, for the



rich man's dogs ate up the scraps, and they also licked Lazarus' sores. The rich man and Lazarus both died. And the rich man, in hell, saw Abraham in the distance, and scabby Lazarus with him. And the rich man said:

‘“Father Abraham, I dare not trouble you, but I see with you scabby Lazarus, who used to lie at my gate; send him to me, and let him dip his finger in water to cool my throat, for I am burning with fire.” But Abraham said: “Why should I send Lazarus into the flames to you? You had all you wanted in the other world and Lazarus had nothing but sorrow. I should like to do what you ask, but I cannot, for there is no communication between us and you.” Then the rich man said: “If it is so, Father Abraham, at least send Lazarus to my house. I left five brothers and am sorry for them. Let him tell them what riches bring, lest they too come to the torment I suffer.” And Abraham said, “They know it. Moses and all the prophets have told of it.” But the rich man replied, “Still, it would be better if some one rose from the dead and went to them: it would make them bethink themselves.” But Abraham replied, “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither would they hear though some one rose from the dead.”’

(Luke xvi. 13-15, 19-31.)

### 30

After this Jesus went into Galilee and lived there with his parents. And when the Jewish Feast of the Harvest came, the brothers of Jesus prepared to go up and asked Jesus to come with them to the Feast. They did not believe in his teaching and said to him: ‘You say that the Jewish worship of God is wrong and that you know the right way to worship God by deeds. If you really think that you know

what no one else knows, then come with us to the Feast—there will be many people there, and you can announce your teaching to them all. If they all believe you, your disciples will see that you are right. Why hide yourself? You say that our worship of God is wrong and that you know the right way: well then, show it to everybody!

And Jesus said to them: 'There is a time for everything. I will go when the time comes.' So his brothers went away, but he stayed behind.

There were many people at the Feast, and they disputed about the teaching of Jesus. Some said his teaching was true; others that it only disturbed the people. When the Feast was half over Jesus himself came to Jerusalem and went into the Temple. In the porch of the Temple were cattle—cows and bulls—sheep, and cages of pigeons, and money-changers who sat beside counters with money. All this was wanted for the sacrifices to God. But Jesus, entering the Temple and seeing many people there, first of all drove the cattle out of the Temple, and let the pigeons go, and upset the tables of the money-changers, and then said to the people:

'The prophet Isaiah said: "The house of God is not the Temple in Jerusalem, but the whole world of God's people." And the prophet Jeremiah also said: "Do not believe the false saying, that this is the house of the Eternal; do not believe it, but change your lives and do not judge falsely, nor oppress the stranger, the widow, and the orphan; do not shed innocent blood, and do not go into the house of God and then say: 'Now we can safely do wrong.' Make not my house a den of thieves. I, God, rejoice not in your sacrifices, but I rejoice in your love of one another." Understand that these words of the prophet mean: The living temple is

the whole world of people when they love one another. We must serve God not in a Temple, but by living in the spirit and by good actions.'

All the people listened to his words and wondered at them, and asked one of another, 'How does he know all this without any learning?' And Jesus knew that everybody was astonished at his words, and he said: 'My teaching is not mine but His who sent me, for he who invents a teaching himself looks for fame from men, but he who seeks what He who sent him desires, is true, and there is no falseness in him. I only teach you to fulfil the will of the Father. If you begin to fulfil the will of God you will know that I have not invented what I say, but that this teaching comes from God.'

And many said: 'People say he is a false Prophet, but here he speaks openly before everybody and no one says anything against him. The only thing that prevents us believing that he is the Messiah (God's Messenger) is that it is written that when the Messiah comes no one will know where he came from; but we know this man and his whole family.'

Then Jesus said to them: 'You know me, and where I come from in the body, but you do not know where I come from in the spirit. You do not know from whom I come in the spirit, though He is the only one you need know. If you had been told that I am the Messiah you would have believed in me, the man, but you do not believe the Father, Who is in me and in you. You must believe only the Father.'

(John vii. 1-29; ii. 13-16; Matt. xxi. 13; xii. 7.)

### 31

And many of the people, seeing all this and hearing him, said: 'He really is a prophet.' Others said: 'This is the Messiah.' But some said: 'Can the

Messiah come from Galilee? It is said in the Scriptures that the Messiah will come from the seed of David, out of Bethlehem, the place David came from.'

And a dispute arose about him, and an agitation sprang up among the people.

Then the High Priests sent men to seize him but the men could not make up their minds to do so; and when they returned to the High Priests and Pharisees, the latter asked them: 'Why have you not brought him?' And they replied: 'No man ever spoke like this man.'

The Pharisees said to them: 'Have you too been led astray? Do any of the rulers, or any of the Pharisees, believe in him? Only the accursed people believe in him, and they do not know the law.'

And they all returned to their homes.

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and spent the night there with his disciples; and in the morning he came again to the Temple, and many people came to listen to him and he taught them again, saying: 'My teaching gives light to the world. He who accepts it will not walk in darkness, but will see clearly what is good and what is evil. I teach what my Father, the Spirit who sent me, teaches to every man.'

And they asked him: 'Where is your Father?'

He replied: 'If you knew me you would know my Father also.'

They asked him: 'Who are you?'

He said: 'I am that spirit which had no beginning and will have no end. I am a Son of Man, but acknowledge the spirit of God to be my Father. When you raise up in yourselves the Son of Man, you will know who I am and will understand that I do nothing of myself, and say nothing of myself, but do and say only what my Father has taught me.'

(John vii. 40-9, 53; viii. 12-29.)

## 32

The Jews surrounded Jesus, and said: 'All you say is difficult to understand and does not agree with our Scriptures. Do not torment us, but tell us plainly: Are you the Messiah who, according to our Scriptures, is to come into the world?'

And Jesus answered them: 'I have already told you who I am, but you do not believe it. Do what I tell you and then you will understand who I am and why I have come. He who follows me and does what I say—he who understands my teaching and fulfils it—is with me and with the Father. I and the Father are one.'

And the Jews were offended by these words and took up stones to kill him.

And he asked them: 'Why do you want to kill me?'

They answered: 'We want to kill you because you, a man, make yourself out to be God.'

And Jesus answered them: 'I said that I am a son of God, and am one with the Father when I do His will. He who acknowledges himself to be a son of God ceases to be a slave, and receives everlasting life. A slave does not live always in his master's house, but the master's son always lives there, and a man who lives in the spirit is united with the Father and lives eternally. I tell you truly that he who keeps my word will never see death.'

Then the Jews said to him: 'Now we know that there is a devil in you. Abraham is dead and the prophets are dead, yet you say that he who fulfils your words will never see death. Are you greater than our Father Abraham? Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead, but he who fulfils your words will not see death!'

And Jesus said: 'I tell you truly that before Abraham was, I am.'

Jesus was speaking about that spirit of God which lived in him and lives in every man, and which has no beginning and no end, but they did not understand it.

The Jews did not know what to do with him, and could not get him convicted. And he went beyond the river Jordan and stayed there.

(John x. 24-38; viii. 34-59.)

### 33

Once, when Jesus was returning to Jerusalem, two of his disciples, James and John, came to him and said, 'Master, promise us that you will do what we ask.'

Jesus said: 'What do you want?'

They replied: 'That we may be your equals.'

But Jesus said: 'You do not yourselves know what you are asking. Every one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven by his own efforts, but no one can do it for another.'

And Jesus called the other disciples to him and said: 'Worldly men consider who is higher and who is lower among them; but among you none should be higher or lower. Among you he who serves every one will be the highest. He who wants to be first among you must think himself the last; for it is the Father's will that the Son of Man should live not to be served, but to serve everybody and give his bodily life for the life of the spirit.'

(Mark x. 35-45.)

### 34

About this, Jesus told them another parable. He said:

'A master went out early one morning to hire labourers for his vineyard, and having agreed to pay them a shilling a day, sent them into his vineyard. Then at breakfast time he went out again and

saw other men without work, and said to them: "You too may go into my vineyard, and I will pay you what is right." And they went. He did this again at the dinner hour, and in the afternoon. And when it was already evening, he again found men without work and said to them: "Why do you stand here all day without work?" They said: "No one has hired us." And he said: "Go you too into my vineyard, and you shall be paid what is right."

'When the time for payment came the master of the vineyard said to his steward: "Call the labourers and pay them all equally, beginning with the last and up to the first." And those who came in the evening received a shilling.

'Then those who had been hired first thought they would receive more, but they too received a shilling each. Then the first ones began to grumble at the master of the vineyard, saying: "These men only worked one hour, but we worked all day from the morning, and you make them equal with us."

'The master told them: "You should not grumble. Did you not agree to work for a shilling? Take what is due to you and go. If I wish to give to the last as much as to the first, may I not do as I like with my own? You are offended at my being kind, and are jealous of your brothers. That is not right."

'And so it is with men: whether a man does what God wishes him to do early or late, all will receive equally, the last the same as the first.'

(Matt. xx. 1-16.)

35

And Jesus explained this by another parable. He said:

'A man had two sons, and the younger wished to go away from his father and said: "Father, give me my share of the property." And his father did so.

Then the younger son took his share and went to a foreign country. There he wasted all he had and became quite poor, and he sank so low that he had to become a swineherd. And he had nothing to eat but the acorns that were given to the pigs. And he thought about his life, and said to himself: "I was wrong to leave my father. At my father's there was plenty of everything, and even his labourers have enough to eat; while here I eat pigs' food. I had better go to my father, bow down at his feet, and say: 'I have sinned, father, towards you, and am not worthy to be your son. Take me back as a labourer.'"

'Thinking this, he went back to his father; and when he came near the house his father saw him and went out to meet him, and took him in his arms and kissed him.

'And the son said: "Father, I have sinned against you, and am not worthy to be your son." The father did not answer these words, but ordered his servants to bring the best clothes and good shoes, and he made his son put them on. And he also ordered a servant to kill a fatted calf. And when everything was ready, the father told those of his household: "This son of mine was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found. Let us feast in honour of this joy."

'And when they had all sat down to table the elder son came back from the fields, and saw that there was feasting in the house. And calling a labourer he asked him: "Why are our people feasting?" And the labourer answered: "Have you not heard that your brother has returned and your father is rejoicing?"

'The elder brother was offended, and did not enter the house. But his father came out to him and called him. Still the elder son would not enter, but said to his father: "I have worked for you a great



many years, and have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never killed a fatted calf for me! My younger brother went away and wasted all his property with drunkards, and now you make a great feast for him."

'And the father answered the elder son: "You are always with me and all that is mine is yours. And you should not be hurt, but glad, that your brother who was dead is now alive again, and after being lost has now been found."

'That is the way God receives all, when—sooner or later—they return to the Father and enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'

(Luke xv. 11-32.)

### 36

One day Jesus said to his disciples: 'Tell me, how do people understand my teaching?' And they answered: 'Some think that you teach the same that John taught; others say that you teach what Isaiah taught, and others say your teaching is like Jeremiah's, and that you are a prophet.'

'Yes,' said Jesus, 'but how do you understand my teaching?'

And Simon Peter said: 'I think you teach that the spirit of God lives in every man, and that therefore every man is a son of God.' Jesus said to him: 'You are happy to have understood this, Simon. No man could have shown it to you, but you have understood it because God dwells in you. It is not I by my words that have shown it to you, but God, my Father, has Himself shown it to you.'

At this time Jesus told his disciples that in Jerusalem he could not escape attacks and insults from those who did not believe his teaching; but that if they killed him they would only kill his body, and not that spirit of God which lived in him.

Hearing these words Peter was very sorry, and took Jesus by the hand, and said to him: 'Don't go to Jerusalem.'

Jesus answered: 'Do not speak so. If you are afraid of suffering and death for me, that shows that you do not think of what is godly but only of what is human. In this life people who live for the Kingdom of God must suffer, because the world loves its own and hates what is godly. Men of the world always have tormented those who fulfilled the will of the Father.'

And calling the people and his disciples, Jesus said: 'Let him who wishes to live according to my teaching give up his bodily life and be ready to suffer; for he who fears for his bodily life will lose his true life, but he who gives up his bodily life will save his true life. And let him who wishes to fulfil my teaching do so not in words but in deeds.'

Then he told them this parable:

'A man had two sons, and said to the first: "Go and work in my garden." And the son said: "I won't!" but afterwards repented and went. And the father went to the second son and said the same to him. The second son answered: "I will go at once." But he did not go. Which of the two fulfilled his father's will?'

And the disciples said: 'The first.'

And Jesus said: 'And I tell you that the publicans and adulterers will enter the Kingdom of God before those who talk but do not act.'

(Matt. xvi. 13-17; 21-25; xxi. 28-31.)

37

Then the disciples said to Jesus: 'Your teaching is hard. Increase our belief that it will be well with us if we live as you teach us.'

Jesus understood that they wished to know what

reward they would have for living a good life, and he said to them:

‘Faith is not the belief in rewards; it is a clear understanding of what life is. If you clearly understand that your life is in the spirit of God, you will not expect any reward. A master does not thank a servant for doing his duty. And a servant, if he understands that he is a servant, is not offended at this, but does his work and knows that he will receive what is due to him. So you too should fulfil the will of the Father and understand that you are servants; and do not expect reward for doing your duty, but be content with what you get. We must not be anxious to receive reward, we must be anxious not to destroy the life given us to enable us to fulfil the will of the Father. Therefore always be ready, like servants who are expecting their master. The servants do not know whether he will return early or late, but have to be always ready.

‘And so it is in life. Always, at every moment, one must fulfil the will of God, not saying to oneself: “Then or there, I will do so-and-so.”

‘Therefore live always in the spirit and in the present. For the life of the spirit there is no such thing as time. Take care that you do not burden yourselves, or befog yourselves with drink, over-eating, or cares, but let the spirit of God always rule over your bodies.’

(Luke xvii. 5-10; xii. 36-40; xxi. 34.)

### 38

And Jesus told them another parable to ‘show how people should live. He said:

‘A master planted a garden, and dug it and arranged it and did everything to make it yield as much fruit as possible. And he sent labourers into the garden to work, gather the fruit, and pay him

according to agreement. And when the time came, the master sent a servant to receive the payment; but the labourers had forgotten that the garden had not been planted and arranged by them and that they had come when it was quite ready; and they drove away the master's messenger empty-handed and lived in the garden as if they were the masters, not considering that the garden was not theirs and that they lived in it by permission of the master. Then the master sent his steward to remind the labourers that the payment was due, but they drove him away too. Then he sent his son. And the labourers thought that if they killed the son they would be left to themselves. So they killed him.

'What was the master to do? He could only turn out the labourers and send others in their place.

'The master is the Father; the garden is the world; the labourers are men; the payment is the life of the spirit; the messengers from the master are holy men who remind people that they should live, not for their bodies, but for the spirit.

'People who have gone astray imagine that life is given them for bodily welfare, and not for the fulfilment of the will of the Father, and they kill in themselves the life of the spirit and so lose their real life.'

(Mark xii. 1-9.)

### 39

After this Christ again came to Jerusalem, and spoke to the people in the Temple about the bad life of the Pharisees.

He said:

'Beware of the teaching of the Scribes, who call themselves the orthodox teachers. Beware of them, for they have taken the places of the real teachers,

the prophets. They have taken for themselves the right to teach men the will of God. They talk, but they do not do what they teach. They wish to be teachers, and therefore try to show off: they dress themselves up, give themselves titles, but do nothing useful. Do not believe them. Remember that no one should call himself "Teacher". These self-styled, orthodox teachers of truth think men can be led to God by external ceremonies and vows, and they do not see that the external does not matter, but that all that is important is in the soul of a man. They fulfil what is external and easy, but what is really necessary and difficult (love, mercy, and truth) they leave alone. All they care about is to keep the outward law and by outward means get others to accept it. Therefore they are like painted coffins: clean outside, but abominable within.

'Outwardly they honour the saints and martyrs, but really it is they who tormented and killed the saints. They were, and are, the enemies of all that is good. From them comes all the evil in the world, for they hide what is good, and call evil good. And that is what must be feared most of all, for as you yourselves know, any mistake can be corrected, but as long as men are mistaken as to what is good, they cannot correct their mistakes. And that is just what is the matter with these self-styled pastors.'

After that Jesus said: 'I wished to unite all men here in Jerusalem so that they should live loving one another and serving one another; but these people only want to kill those who teach what is good.'

And having said this he left the Temple.

And Jesus said: 'I tell you truly, that this Temple will fall in ruins with all its ornaments, and nothing will be left of it. But there is a Temple of God—the hearts of those that love one another.'

And they asked him, 'When will that Temple be?'

And he answered: 'Not yet. For a long time people will use my teaching to deceive others, and this will cause wars and disturbances, and there will be much lawlessness and little love.

'But when everybody has understood the true teaching, then evil and temptations will come to an end.'

(Luke xx. 46; Matt. xxiii. 1-39; Mark iii. 28, 29; Matt. xxiv. 1-14.)

## 40

The Scribes and Pharisees tried as hard as they could to destroy Jesus. They assembled in council and began to discuss how to do it. They said: 'This man must be stopped. He makes his teaching so persuasive that if he is left alone everybody will believe him and will abandon our religion. Half the people already believe in him; and if everybody should believe his teaching that all men are brothers and sons of one Father, and that our Hebrew people do not differ from other nations, the Romans will come and conquer us and there will no longer be a Hebrew kingdom.'

And the Scribes and Pharisees long discussed the matter. They wished to kill Jesus to rid themselves of him, but were afraid of the people and dared not do it.

Then their High Priest, whose name was Caiaphas, said: 'You need not be so much afraid. One man has sometimes to be killed to save a whole nation. And if we do not put an end to this man the whole nation will perish, or if it does not perish it will be scattered and will abandon our one true faith. So we must not hesitate to kill Jesus.'

And when Caiaphas had said this, all agreed with him and decided to kill Jesus. And if Jesus had been in Jerusalem they would at once have taken

him and killed him, but they did not know where he was.

But when the Feast of the Passover drew near, the High Priests thought Jesus would be sure to come with the other people to the Feast, and they told their servants that if any one saw Jesus he should bring him to them.

And really, six days before the Passover Jesus said to his disciples: 'Now let us go to Jerusalem.' But the disciples knew that the High Priests wished to kill Jesus, and they begged him not to go to Jerusalem. They said: 'The High Priests have decided to stone you. If you go there they are sure to kill you.'

Jesus answered: 'Only he who walks in darkness stumbles and falls, but he who walks in the daylight does not stumble. A man cannot err who lives in the light of God's will, and does as God wishes. Such a man cannot be afraid. Come to Jerusalem.'

And they got ready and went.

(John xi. 47-57, 7-10.)

#### 41

When they heard in Jerusalem that Jesus was coming, the people went out to meet him, surrounded him, put him on an ass, ran before him, and broke twigs from the trees and threw them on the road, shouting: 'Here is our true King! He has told us about the true God!' And so Jesus rode into Jerusalem. And people asked: 'Who is that?' And those who knew him said: 'It is Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'

When he had ridden up to the Temple, Jesus got off the ass, entered the Temple, and began to teach the people. And the Pharisees and priests saw him and said to one another: 'See what that man is doing! All the people are going after him!'

They would have liked to take him at once, but dared not, because they feared the people. And they planned how to do it without provoking them.

So Jesus taught the people quite undisturbed. Besides Jews, there were in the Temple heathen Greeks also. The Greeks had heard that the teaching of Jesus was not for Jews only but for all men, and they wanted to hear him. They told this to Philip and Philip told Andrew.

The disciples were afraid of bringing Jesus and the Greeks together. They feared that the people would be angry with Jesus for making no difference between the Jews and other nations, and at first they could not make up their minds to tell him what the Greeks wanted; but at last they told him.

Hearing that the Greeks wished to be his disciples, Jesus was at first taken aback. He knew that if he did not make any distinction between Jews and heathens, the Jews would be angry with him. But he soon recovered, and said: 'There is no difference between Jews and heathens, the same Son of Man is in all men. Though I perish for it, the time has come to acknowledge the Son of Man, the one spirit of God in all men. A grain of wheat becomes fruitful only when it itself perishes. And a man bears fruit only when he gives his life to fulfil the will of God. He who loves his bodily life lessens his spiritual life, but he who is ready to give up his bodily life receives spiritual life.'

'My soul is now in conflict, whether I am to yield to considerations of my temporary life, or to do the will of the Father. But now that the time has come when I ought to do that for which I was sent into the world, can I say: "Father, deliver me from what I ought to do"? I cannot say that, but only: "Father, make Thyself felt within me, that I may glorify the Son of Man and unite all men together".'



And the Jews replied to this, saying: 'We know that the Christ must come, but we do not understand what you mean by "glorifying the Son of Man".'

And Jesus replied: 'To glorify the Son of Man is to live in the spiritual light. And we all have the spiritual light in us. To glorify the Son of Man above that which is of the earth means to believe that the spirit of God lives in every man. He who believes my teaching does not believe me, but the spirit of God; and the spirit of God gives life to the world and lives in each one of you. And he who understands my teaching knows *that* spirit, for that spirit lives in him and gives life to the world. If any one hears my words and does not understand them, I do not blame him, for I have come not to blame but to save. He who does not understand my words does not believe in the spirit of God, for what I say I do not say from myself but from the spirit of the Father. And the spirit of the Father lives in me. What I say, the spirit told me.'

And, having said this, Jesus went away, and again hid from the High Priests.

(Matt. xxi. 7-12; John xii. 19-36; 44-50.)

## 42

And many of the rich and powerful among those who heard these words believed the teaching of Jesus, but they were afraid to confess this before the Pharisees, for not one of the Pharisees acknowledged that teaching. They did not acknowledge the truth of the teaching, for they were accustomed to believe human teaching and not God's.

And again the High Priests and Scribes met in the Court of Caiaphas and began considering how to seize Jesus secretly, to kill him. They were afraid to take him openly. And one of the first disciples

of Jesus, Judas Iscariot, came to their meeting, and said: 'If you are afraid to seize Jesus openly before the people, I will find a time when there will be few people with him and I will show you where he is, and then you can take him. What will you give me for it?' And they promised him thirty pieces of silver. Judas agreed, and from that time began to look for an opportunity to deliver Jesus to the High Priests, that they might seize him.

Meanwhile Jesus had again gone away from Jerusalem, and was alone with his disciples. And when the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread came round, the disciples asked him: 'Where shall we keep the Feast of the Passover?' And Jesus said: 'Go into one of the villages and enter the first house, and say you have no time to prepare for the Passover but that you ask to be allowed to keep the Feast there.'

The disciples did as they were told and went into the village, and there went to the first house, and the master of the house let them in.

When they had all come—Jesus and his twelve disciples with Judas Iscariot among them—they sat at a table to keep the Feast of the Passover. And Jesus guessed that Judas had promised to give him up to the Pharisees to be killed, but he did not wish to repay Judas evil for evil and to accuse him before all the disciples; but as he had always taught his disciples to love, so now he only wished to soften the heart of Judas by love.

And when he and his twelve were all seated at table, Jesus took some bread, broke it into twelve pieces, and gave a piece to each of them, saying: 'This is my body, take and eat it.' And then he poured wine into a cup and handed it to the disciples, saying: 'Drink, all of you, out of this cup. It is my blood.'

And when they had drunk wine out of the cup one after another, he said: 'Yes, this is my blood, which I am shedding for the sins of the world.' And having said this, Jesus rose from table, took off his outer garment, tied a towel round him, took a jug of water, and said that he would now wash the feet of all the disciples. He came first to Peter, but Peter moved away, saying: 'Can a master wash his disciples' feet?' Jesus said: 'It seems strange to you that I want to wash your feet, but you will soon know why I do it. I do it because, though you are pure, you are not all of you pure.'

Jesus was thinking of Judas when he said this.

And Jesus washed the feet of all the disciples, including Judas. And when he had done it and had put on his garment, he spoke to all the disciples, and said:

'Do you know now why I did this? I did it that you should always do it to each other. I, your Master, do it to show you how to behave to those who injure you. If you understand this, and will act so, it will be well with you always.'

And having said this, Jesus became sad, and added: 'Yes, yes! One of those whose feet I washed will betray me!'

The disciples looked at each other, and did not know whom he meant. And one of the disciples was sitting close to Jesus, and Simon Peter nodded to him, that he should ask Jesus whom he meant. He did so, and Jesus said: 'It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread.' And he gave a piece of bread to Judas Iscariot and said to him, 'What you want to do, do quickly!' At first no one understood what Jesus' words meant; but Judas understood them, and as soon as he had taken the piece of bread he rose and went out; and when the disciples understood what was happening

it was too late to try to catch him, for the night was dark.

And when Judas had gone, Jesus said: 'Children, I shall not be with you long. Don't reason about my teaching, but, as I said to the Pharisees, do what I do. I give you one new commandment: as I have loved all of you to the end, so you also should always love one another and love all men to the last. In this commandment lies my whole teaching. Only by keeping this commandment can you be my disciples. Love one another and love all men.'

(John xii. 42, 43; Matt. xxvi. 3-5; 14-28; John xiii. 2-35.)

## 43

He also said to his disciples: 'Life consists in coming nearer and nearer to the perfection of God. That is the way. I follow it, and you know the way.'

Then Thomas said to him: 'No, we do not know where you are going, and so we cannot know the way.'

Jesus answered: 'I am going to the Father, and my teaching is the way to Him. One cannot unite with the Father of life except through my teaching. Fulfil my teaching about love, and you will know the Father.'

Philip said: 'Show us the Father.'

And Jesus replied: 'How is it you do not know the Father? My teaching is that I am in the Father and the Father in me. He who lives by my teaching and fulfils my commandments will know the Father. I shall die, and worldly men will not see me, but my spirit will not die, and you will live by it. And then you will understand that I am in the Father and the Father in me.'

And Judas (not Iscariot but another) asked: 'Will your spirit come then only into us and not into all men?'

And Jesus said in reply: 'The Father loves him who fulfils my teaching, and my spirit lives in him. But the Father does not love him who does not fulfil my teaching, and his spirit does not live in that man. My teaching is not my own but the Father's.

'This is all I can tell you now. But my spirit, the spirit of truth, will enter into you afterwards and will show you all, and you will then remember and understand much that I have told you. And when you understand it you will have peace: not peace such as worldly people have, but such peace of the spirit that you will fear nothing.

'Why are you sorry that I am leaving you? I am going to the Father, and from Him I shall return to you as the spirit of truth, and shall enter your hearts. You should not sorrow at my death, but be glad; because instead of me—my body—you will have my spirit in your hearts, and that is better for you.'

(John xiv. 1-28.)

#### 44

'If you will be guided by my law of love and will fulfil that law, you will have all you desire, for it is the will of the Father that you should have what you desire. As the Father has given me what is good, so I give you what is good. If you fulfil my commandment as I fulfil my Father's commandment, you will be blessed. My commandment is that you love one another as I love you; that is, so that you are ready to give up your bodily life for love. You are equal to me if you do what I have taught you. I do not consider you as slaves but as equal to myself, for I have explained to you all that I have understood from the Father, and you can do what I do. I have given you the only true teaching, and that teaching gives the only true welfare.

'The whole teaching is to love one another. Do not be surprised if the world hates you and persecutes you, for my teaching is hateful to the world. If you were at one with the world it would love you. But I have separated you from the world, and therefore it will hate and persecute you. If they persecute me they will persecute you also. They cannot help doing it, for they do not know the Father. I told them who their Father is but they would not listen to me. They have not understood my teaching, for they did not understand what I told them about the Father. And on that account they have hated me yet more.

'I should say much more to you, but it would be difficult for you to understand it now. But when the spirit of truth enters into you, it will show you the whole truth, for it will not tell you anything new or of its own, but it will tell you that which is from God, and will show you the way in all the events of your life. This spirit within you will tell you the very same that I tell you.'

(John xv. 7-26; xvi. 12-15.)

## 45

After that Jesus lifted his eyes to heaven and said: 'My Father, Thou hast given thy son the freedom of life that he may receive true life. True life is to know the true God. And I have shown Thee to men. I have done what Thou hast ordered me to do. They were Thine before, but according to Thy will I have shown them the truth—that Thou art within them—and they have recognized Thee. They have understood that all that is within me is within them also, and that it all comes from Thee. They have understood that all that is mine is Thine and all that is Thine is mine. I am no longer of the world, but am going to Thee; but they are in

the world and therefore I pray Thee, Father, keep them in the truth! I do not pray that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst deliver them from falsehood and strengthen them in Thy truth, that they should all be one: as Thou art in me and I in Thee, that they also should be in us. That all should be united into one, and that men should understand that they were not born of their own will, but that Thou, loving them, hast sent them into the world, as Thou hast sent me.

‘Righteous Father! the world does not yet know Thee, but I know Thee, and they have learnt to know Thee through me. And I have explained to them that Thou, loving them, hast given them life that Thy love for them should return from them to Thee!’

(John xvii. 1-26.)

## 46

Then Jesus rose and went with his disciples to the Mount of Olives. And on the way he said to them: ‘Yes, the time has come when, as is said in the Scriptures, the shepherd will be killed and the sheep will be scattered. So it will be with you. I shall be taken and you will run away.’

‘No, I will not run away,’ said Peter, ‘though everyone else should run away I would never leave you. With you I am ready to go anywhere: to prison or to death!’

But Jesus said: ‘Do not boast beforehand of what you will do. It may be that to-night, before the cocks crow, you will deny me not once but three times.’

‘I will never do so,’ said Peter, and the other disciples said the same.

When they came to the Garden of Gethsemane,

Jesus said to them: 'Wait here a little while. I wish to pray.' And he took with him only Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. And he said to them: 'I am sorrowful. Stay with me.'

And he went a little way from them, and lay on the ground, and began to pray, saying: 'My Father! deliver me from what awaits me!' Then he was silent for a short time, and added: 'But all the same let not my will but Thine be done, and let it not be as I wish, but as Thou dost!'

Then he rose and went to his disciples, but they had fallen asleep. Jesus awoke them, and said: 'Be strong in spirit. Only the spirit is strong, the flesh is weak.'

And again Jesus went aside, and again he began to pray, and said: 'My Father! Thy will be done; not my will, but Thine!'

And having said that, he returned to the disciples and saw that they were again asleep. And he went from them a third time, and again said: 'My Father! not my will, but Thine be done!'

Then he returned to the disciples and said to them: 'Come now, I am going to give myself up into the hands of the worldly.'

(Matt. xxvi. 30-46.)

47

And just when he had said this Judas Iscariot appeared, and with him soldiers and servants of the High Priests with arms and lights. And Judas at once came up to Jesus, and greeted him and kissed him.

And Jesus said to him: 'Friend, why have you come?'

Then the guards surrounded Jesus and wished to seize him. But Peter snatched a sword from the High Priest's servant, and cut off his right ear.



And seeing this, Jesus said to Peter: 'Put the sword back into its scabbard. All who take the sword will perish by the sword.'

After that Jesus turned to the people who had come for him, and said: 'Why have you come for me with weapons, as for a robber? Have I not been among you in the Temple every day, teaching you—why did you not take me then?'

Then the officer told the soldiers to bind Jesus. And the soldiers bound him, and led him first to Caiaphas. This was the same Caiaphas who by saying that it was better that one man should perish than that the whole nation should do so, had persuaded the Pharisees to destroy Jesus. And Jesus was brought into the courtyard of the house.

The disciples of Jesus all ran away. Only one of them, Peter, followed Jesus from afar, and looked to see where they led him.

When Jesus was brought into the High Priest's yard, Peter also entered to see what would happen. And a woman in the yard saw him, and asked: 'Were you also with Jesus of Galilee?' And Peter was afraid that he might be accused with Jesus, and replied: 'I don't know what you are talking about.'

Then, when Jesus was taken into the house, Peter entered the porch with the rest of the people. A fire was burning there, and another woman was warming herself at it. When Peter came near the fire, this woman looked at him and said: 'I think this man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' And Peter was still more frightened, and began to swear that he had never been with Jesus and knew nothing about him.

A little later some other people drew near to Peter and said: 'All the same, you must be one of the rioters. Your speech shows that you are from Galilee.' Then Peter again swore that he had never

even seen Jesus. And hardly had he said this when a cock crowed, and Peter remembered the words of Jesus: 'Before the cocks crow to-night you will perhaps have denied me not once, but three times.' And he went out of the yard and wept bitterly.

(Matt. xxvi. 47-58; John xviii. 12-14; Matt. xxvi. 69-75.)

## 48

The Elders and the Scribes gathered at the High Priest's house, and when they had all assembled Jesus was brought in, and the High Priest asked him what he taught and who his disciples were.

Jesus answered: 'I have always spoken openly before everybody and I never hid anything. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard and understood my teaching. They will tell you.'

When Jesus said this, one of the High Priest's servants hit him in the face, and said: 'Who are you talking to? Can one answer the High Priest like that?'

Jesus said: 'If I have answered badly, tell me what was wrong. But if I have not answered badly, why do you strike me?'

The High Priest and the Elders tried to convict Jesus, but could find no evidence that condemned him. At last they hunted up two false witnesses, and these witnesses said that Jesus had declared that he could destroy the Temple and build it up again in three days. The High Priest asked Jesus: 'What do you say to this?' But Jesus did not answer. Then the High Priest said to him: 'Tell us then, are you the Christ, the Son of God?' And Jesus answered: 'Yes, I am a son of God.'

Then the High Priest cried: 'You blaspheme against God! What other proofs do we need? You have all heard how he blasphemes!' And the High Priest addressed the meeting, saying: 'Now you

have yourselves heard how he blasphemes against God! To what do you condemn him for that?"

And they all answered: 'To death!'

Then all the people and the guards set upon Jesus, and began to spit in his face and to hit him on the cheek. They blindfolded him, struck him, and asked: 'Now then, you Son of God! Guess who struck you.' But Jesus remained silent.

(Mark xiv. 53; John xviii. 19-23; Matt. xxvi. 59-68.)

## 49

After this Jesus was led, bound, to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. When they had brought him before Pilate, the latter came out into the porch and said to those who had brought him: 'What do you accuse this man of?' And they answered: 'He is an evil-doer; that is why we have brought him.'

Pilate answered: 'If you consider him an evil-doer, judge him yourselves by your own laws.' But they said: 'We have brought him to you that you should execute him, for we are not allowed to put anyone to death.'

Then Pilate asked them again what they accused Jesus of. They said: 'He stirs up the people and forbids them to pay taxes to Caesar, and calls himself the King of the Jews.'

Pilate listened to them, and ordered Jesus to be brought to his Court.

When Jesus came before him, Pilate asked:

'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Are you asking me this of yourself, or are you repeating what others have told you?'

Pilate replied: 'I am not a Jew! Your own people have brought you before me because you call yourself King.'

Jesus said: 'Yes, I am a king, but my kingdom is not of earth. If I were an earthly king my subjects

would fight for me and would not have given me up into the hands of the Jews. But you see what they have done to me! My kingdom is not of earth.'

Then Pilate asked: 'You still consider yourself a king?'

Jesus said: 'I teach the people the truth about the Kingdom of Heaven. And he who lives by the truth is a king.'

Pilate said: 'Truth? What is truth?'

And Pilate turned his back to Jesus, and went out to the Jews and said to them: 'I don't think that this man has done anything wrong; nor is there anything to put him to death for.'

But the High Priests insisted, saying that he did much evil and stirred up the people, and had aroused the whole of Judaea.

Then Pilate again questioned Jesus in the presence of the High Priests, and said to him: 'You see how they accuse you? Why do you not defend yourself?' But Jesus remained silent and did not say another word, so that Pilate was surprised at him.

Then Pilate remembered that Galilee was under King Herod, and asked: 'Is he not from Galilee?' They replied that he was. Then Pilate said: 'If he is from Galilee he is in the power of Herod.' And to get rid of the Jews, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod.

(John xviii. 28-38; Luke xxiii. 2-7; Mark xv. 3-5.)

50

So Jesus was taken to Herod. And Herod had heard much about Jesus and was glad to see him. He had him brought before him and began questioning him about several things, but Jesus did not reply. And the High Priests and the Scribes accused Jesus of many things before Herod, as they had done before Pilate, and said that he was a rebel.

But Herod considered Jesus to be a foolish fellow and gave orders to put a red mantle on him to make him look ridiculous; and in this fool's dress sent him back to Pilate.

When he was brought to Pilate the second time Pilate again called the rulers of the Jews, and said to them: 'You brought this man before me as one who rouses the people to revolt, and I have examined him before you and do not find that he has been a rebel. I sent him with you to Herod, and, as you see, nothing serious has been found against him there either. So I think that he should not be executed, but should be flogged and then set free.'

But when they heard this, they all shouted: 'No! Put him to death in the Roman way. . . . Nail him to a cross!'

Pilate heard them, and said: 'Very well. But it is an old custom that one criminal should be pardoned at the Passover. There is a robber, Barabbas, who has been condemned to death, and there is this man. One of the two can be set free. Which shall it be—Jesus, or Barabbas?'

Pilate wished to save Jesus; but the High Priests persuaded the people, and they all shouted: 'Barabbas! Barabbas!'

Then Pilate asked: 'And what is to be done with Jesus?' And again they all shouted: 'Crucify him in the Roman way!'

But Pilate still did not wish to execute Jesus, and again began trying to persuade the High Priests to let him go. He said: 'Why are you set against him? He has done no evil; and there is no reason to execute him.'

But the High Priests and their servants again shouted: 'Crucify him! Crucify him in the Roman way! Crucify him! Crucify him!'

And Pilate said: 'Then take him and crucify him yourselves, for I find no fault in him.'

And the High Priests said: 'We demand what is lawful. By the law he should be crucified for calling himself the "Son of God".'

Then Pilate was puzzled, because he did not know what 'Son of God' meant.

And he went back into the Court, and again called Jesus and asked him: 'Whence are you? Who are you, and where do you come from?' But Jesus did not answer. Pilate said: 'Why do you not answer me? Do you know that you are in my power, and that I can crucify you or set you free?'

Then Jesus answered: 'No, you have no power over me. Power comes only from above.'

(Luke xxiii. 8-16; Matt. xxvii. 15-23; John xix. 6-11.)

## 51

Pilate so wished to set Jesus free that he again spoke to the people, and said: 'How is it that you want to crucify your "king"?''

But the Jews answered: 'If you set Jesus free, you will show that you are not a faithful servant of Caesar, because he who makes himself king is Caesar's enemy. We have one Caesar, so crucify this "king"!'

When Pilate heard these words he saw that he must crucify Jesus. And he came out to the Jews, poured water on his hands, and said: 'I wash my hands of the blood of this innocent man.'

And the people cried: 'Let his blood be on us and on our children!'

Then Pilate ordered Jesus to be beaten. And when the soldiers had beaten him, they put a crown on his head and a stick in his hand, and threw the red mantle over his shoulders and began to mock him. They bowed before him, saying: 'Hail, King

of the Jews!’ And they struck him on the cheek and on the head, and spat in his face. And they all shouted: ‘Crucify him! Our king is Caesar. . . . Crucify him!’

So Pilate ordered Jesus to be crucified. And they took off the red mantle and put his own clothes on him, and made him carry the cross to the place of execution, called Golgotha, that he might be crucified there. And they nailed him to the cross, and two other men with him; one on each side of him and Jesus in the middle.

And Jesus said: ‘Father ! forgive them, for they know not what they do!’

(John xix. 12-13; Matt. xxvii. 24-31; Luke xxiii. 34.)

## 52

And when Jesus was hanging on the cross the people surrounded him and abused him. Some came up to him, nodding their heads at him and saying: ‘See! You wished to destroy the Temple of Jerusalem and build it up again in three days. Well now! Save yourself—come down from the cross!’

And the High Priests and Scribes stood there and laughed at him too, saying: ‘He saved others, but cannot save himself! Show now that you are the Christ. Come down from the cross and then we will believe you! He said he was the Son of God and that God would not forsake him. . . . Why has God now forsaken him?’

And the people and the High Priests and the soldiers all abused him.

And one of the robbers who were crucified beside him also said: ‘If you are the Christ, save yourself and us!’ But the other robber, hearing this, said: ‘You do not fear God. You are yourself hanging on a cross for your evil deeds, yet you abuse an

innocent man. You and I are crucified for a reason, but this man has done nothing bad.'

At the ninth hour Jesus said loudly: 'Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani!' – which means 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'

And when the people heard it, they laughed and said: 'He is calling Elias the prophet. Let us see if Elias will come!'

Afterwards Jesus said: 'Give me something to drink!' And a man took a sponge and soaked it in vinegar, and held it up on a reed to Jesus. Jesus sucked the sponge, and then said in a loud voice: 'It is finished! Father, into Thy hands I yield my spirit!' Then his head drooped and he died.

(Matt. xxvii. 39-44; Luke xxiii. 39-41; Matt. xxvii. 46-9, John xix. 28-30.)



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